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# **MANAGING A SYSTEMIC CHANGE ON AN OPERATIONAL LEVEL IN A PUBLIC ORGANIZATION**

A Case Study of the Swedish Armed Forces

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Faculty of Management and Business

Master's Thesis

May, 2019

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# ABSTRACT

Ann-Charlotte Johansson: Managing a systemic change on an operational level in a public organization: A case study of the Swedish Armed Forces

Master's Thesis

Tampere University

Leadership for Change

May, 2019

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Change is inevitable in organizations as the internal and external environment of an organization is dynamic as well as develops and evolves. The implementation of organizational changes is, however, a significant challenge within public organizations and there are several cases where public management reforms have gone wrong since they have failed to produce the benefits claimed for undergoing such an act. Several authors suggest that the specific context of public organizations have a negative impact in the successful management of organizational change as well as that it is something that is barely taken into account although public organizations are dependent and influenced by their surrounding environment and, hence, have to change when necessary. In addition, there has only been a limited amount of attention regarding how a change is managed within organizations. Thus, scholars mean that further research is of necessity regarding in what way the implementation process is affected by the characteristics of public organizations as well as how it is managed within organizations.

The case organization, the Swedish Armed Forces, is currently undergoing a systemic change during the targeting period of 2016-2020 since there is a need for a stronger defense because of the declined security situation in Europe. The purpose of this thesis is to explore and report how managers, on an operational level, manage a systemic change in the context of a public organization. A further aim of this study is to explore and report eventual factors that enable and hinder these managers from managing a systemic change in the context of a public organization.

The theoretical framework for this thesis was developed simultaneously as the data analysis process following the methodology of grounded theorizing. The emerged concepts during this process were in line with the theories of systems thinking, systemic change, and change management. Semi-structured theme interviews with three operational managers in the Swedish Armed Forces were conducted. With the ambition to contribute to present knowledge within the management of systemic change on an operational level in the context of a public organization, answers to this thesis research questions were presented by first presenting the idea of this thesis and then comparing and contrasting the findings to previous literature.

The findings reveal that institutional dynamics, type of change, and communication, participation, and resources influence the level of difficulty when managing a change on an operational level in the context of a public organization. The Swedish Armed Forces is a large, bureaucratic, hierarchical, and geographically spread military organization, resulting in a complicated line making decision process and several management layers, which influence the amount of communication to and participation of personnel on an operational level during times of change. The findings also disclose that managing change on an operational level is performed differently but is mainly differentiated based on the attitude of the personnel. That is if the personnel are resistant or supportive of the changes. Another finding is that, regardless the attitude of the personnel, operational managers should always strive to improve and enhance the team's atmosphere as well as, when necessary, focus on the emotions of those adversely impacted by the change by performing different activities. The final finding is that there is no "one size fits all" approach to manage change as all organizations have a unique community and own, structure, culture, history and needs as well as include different sub-cultures and perspectives. Thus, the argument that the field of management and change include several theories and approaches that are contradictory towards one another where correct recommendations have been largely misinterpreted, misrepresented, and misunderstood, may be argued to be misleading as there is no one single way to lead a change due to several influencing factors that all play a vital role in how a change can and may be managed within an organization.

Keywords: Managing change, systemic change, public management reform, operational managers, Swedish Armed Forces, military.

The originality of this thesis has been checked using the Turnitin OriginalityCheck service.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

The following chapter aims to describe this thesis background as well as argues for its significance. The chapter also presents this thesis purpose, research questions, scope, and structure.

## 1.1 Background and significance of the study

Change cannot any longer be seen as a shift from one steady place to another as the pace of the ever-changing world increases day by day (Perlman & Leppert, 2013). Change is inevitable in organizations as the internal and external environment of an organization is dynamic and continuously evolve (Ha, 2014). It is an all-present part of organizations in the twenty-first century as, for instance, human capital is becoming more movable and technologies continually advance. That, coupled with economic instability, the frequency, and size of change within organizations around the world, continues to grow (Schriesheim & Neider, 2016). Organizational change, hence, appears to be a permanent feature in the public sector (Schmidt et al., 2017; Coventry & Nutley, 2001).

Management is continually confronting new challenges and, thus, leaving old concerns behind. Implementing an organizational change is, however, a significant challenge within public organizations and there are several cases where public management reforms have gone wrong since they have failed to produce the claimed benefits of such an effort. (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004; Fernandez & Rainey, 2006; Isett et al., 2012; Van der Voet et al., 2016). Several examples show that old constraints are just re-appearing in new clothes (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004). Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004) present discussion points regarding limits, dilemmas, contradictions, and paradoxes in public management reforms, such as to motivate staff and promote cultural change versus downsizing an organization. The authors state that employees in public organizations may be non-persuaded about their work and the actual "need" for their jobs and, thus, mean that "...there is a price to pay for the contradictions in terms of loss of morale, loyalty, the attractiveness of a public service career...". (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004, p. 180).

Public organizations are frequently argued to unsystematically develop tasks as well as incapable of meeting new demands, opportunities, and conditions due to poor, clumsy and ill coordination, leading to a negative image of bureaucracy and government (Leemans, 1976). There is a considerable amount of evidence that demonstrates that the implementation of

organizational change fails frequently. For instance, the failure rate of all change initiatives was reported to be around 70 percent in the late '90s (Kotter, 1995). Further research upholds this percentage despite the evident progression in the field of organizational change management wherein statistics presented in 2012 display a failure rate around 60 percent (Scott & Aiken, 2009; Uhl & Gollenia, 2012). There is a great amount of research that argues about the reasons for the relatively high rate in unsuccessful organizational changes (By, 2005). For instance, the failure of initiations towards organizational change is stated to be dependent on the management's lack of engagement, knowledge, time and patience (Bergström et al., 2014; Sörqvist, 2004). Other identified attributes for unsuccessful change is inappropriate organizational culture, too robust organizational processes non-friendly towards change, employee apathy, inadequate management support, poor communication, poor leadership, and inappropriate planning (Mosadeghrad & Ansarian, 2014; Swedish Quality Management Academy, 2012). Other scholars mean that managing change simply is difficult, but that it is even more difficult for large organizations geographically spread across a country and that organizations, thus, need to change the ways of working and its routines to take advantage "of the new" as well as that everyone needs to be ready for change (Swedish Quality Management Academy, 2012).

A successful organizational change is defined as "...the degree to which stated goals have been achieved and could refer to goals such as improving performance..." (Schmidt et al., 2017, p. 1540). Leadership is an essential factor to include for a successful change to come about. Advocates within organizational change management mean that "...successful management of change is accepted as a necessity in order to survive and succeed in today's highly competitive and continuously evolving environment" (By, 2005, p. 370). Several authors and practitioners describe leaders as someone governing the already ongoing process of change and mean that they should train their ability to follow, interpret and govern the process in the organization in order for a positive change to come about (Ahrenfelt, 2001; Swedish Quality Management Academy, 2012).

The Swedish Armed Forces (which I refer to hereafter as the *Armed Forces*), the case organization under study, can be explained as a typical example of a highly established organization that has undergone several organizational changes in accordance to the changing environment, leading to structural inconsistencies (Bergström et al., 2014). Society's needs and demands, and an accelerating pace of societal change influence and pressure the public sector

to undergo reforms to provide faster and better services to society (see e.g. Marcinkevičiūtė & Žukovskis, 2016).

Bergström et al. (2014) stress that the Armed Forces has unique conditions as elected representatives govern the organization. The authors also highlight that the organization is unique as organizational changes are taking place both within and between the Armed Forces as well as other organizations within the Total Defense (civil defense and military defense) (Bergström et al., 2014). The decision-making process is noted to be relatively long due to factors such as decisions of re-organizations taken on a political level but arranged by the Armed Forces. Besides, the defense doctrine, that Sweden defends itself against eventual invasions has not maintained after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The altered defense doctrine is another influencing factor to the longevity of the process as the decision-makers have been uncertain in how the security situation would be understood after 1989 since they neither had an alternative security policy nor an idea in how the structural operation would run as a non-invasion defense. Since 1992, extensive changes have been proposed through the Defense Bills where the Armed Forces defense budget has been downsized as well as undergone different modifications such as disbanding regiments, relocating units, and merging units and authorities (Bergström et al., 2014).

Despite the formerly increased tightened budget and modifications, the Armed Forces operations aim for it to perform at more or less the same level as beforehand and with the same quality (Swedish Quality Management Academy, 2012). The result of the reforms is drastic changes in the organization's goal, and conditions, followed by a restructure of the Armed Forces core values (King, 2011). Some mean that the Armed Forces is an organization in which cynicism is flowing, formed through the resistance impelled by formerly failed organizational changes, leading to a less wanted attitude towards management (Bergström et al., 2014).

The Armed Forces can be described as an old and immense organization, which is followed by the challenge to introduce and effectively implement change as both small and significant changes is something that can be difficult to embrace in such an organization as it may be considered as a threat (see e.g. Wynen, Verhoest, & Demuzere, 2015; Leemans, 1976; Swedish Armed Forces, n.d.d). Organizations are generally homeostatic that preferably perform marginal adaptations than undergoes fundamental changes (Leemans, 1976). Kaufman (1971) means that there are obstacles to change that has to be conquered in organizations as they include features averse to change. For instance, organizations tend to develop different cultures



of bureaucracy, which includes members that disrupt innovative impulses. Hence, change initiatives can result in tension as members may see them as threats since organizations have integrated devices that aim to maintain stability (Leemans, 1976).

The global security environment is currently unbalanced and characterized by breaches of global standards by some countries as well as ongoing conflicts, which is something that is identified to persevere in the future (Kamara, 2018). The current deteriorating security situation has resulted in grave operational and strategic implications for the Armed Forces, necessitating a military transformation. (see e.g. Kamara, 2018; Swedish Armed Forces, 2017).

In 2015, the Swedish government stated that the security situation in Europe had deteriorated and that the plan for the Armed Forces heightened preparedness, a phase of crisis and war, thus, had been resumed. Consequently, the government presented an official statement that the goals of the Total Defense were heading for a systemic change since there was a need for a stronger defense. (Swedish Armed Forces, 2017, 2018b; The Government, 2015). It can, therefore, be understood that the Swedish Armed Forces Supreme Commander, General Bydén, concurs with the views above when he states that the global environment is changing in a way that is placing more pressure on the Armed Forces to keep up with the fast-paced and changeable world (Swedish Armed Forces, 2017). Managing change in a constantly changing organization such as the Armed Forces in which the employers may have a less positive attitude towards management, can be assumed to be a challenging task (see e.g. Bergström et al., 2014; Swedish Quality Management Academy, 2017; Sörqvist, 2004).

It is acknowledged that change is an essential factor for the survival and success of organizations, leading to the identification and development of change models and strategies that managers can use in order for the change process to successfully proceed (Helms-Mills et al., 2009). An organizational change or reform can be messed up through poor implementation in which the worst effects of an unsound reform can be delayed or weakened by management (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004). Organizational change is, however, usually not studied from aspects of implementation in public management research, despite its importance in public management practices (Stewart & Kringas, 2003; Van der Voet, 2014). Instead, public management researches usually focus on organizational change at a sector or national level (Kuipers, et al., 2013). For instance, Schmidt et al. (2017, p. 1539) state:

*Within the public management literature, much attention has focused on changes to the structure of government. Research from such a perspective adds to our understanding of what changes and why change occurs but pays limited attention to the way of managing a change within organizations.*

In other words, there is relatively little evidence and a lack of framework in how organizational change can be managed, successfully, in public organizations. This indicates that the issue may be a complex phenomenon to comprehend; something that might not be so surprising as the current theories and approaches within the field is contradictory and unclear (see e.e. By, 2005; Van der Voet, 2014).

The ability to lead and implement change is an enormous challenge for the entire public sector. In addition, several authors suggest that the specific context of public organizations, such as bureaucracy, might negatively impact the successful management of organizational change. Context is something that is barely taken into account although these organizations are dependent and influenced by their surrounding environment, such as the global political climate, and, hence, have to undergo an organizational change when necessary (cf. Burnes, 2009; Chustz & Larson, 2006; Coram & Burnes, 2001; Golembiewski et al., 1981; Isett et al., 2012; Leemans, 1976; McNulty & Ferlie, 2004; Van der Voet et al., 2016). Thus, several scholars mean that further research should include and focus on aspects of how the implementation process is affected by the characteristics of public organizations (see e.g. Kickert, 2014; McNulty & Ferlie, 2004; Van der Voet, 2014; Van der Voet et al., 2016) as well as "...how change is managed within organizations" Schmidt et al. (2017, p. 1539). It can, therefore, be understood that Reinholz and Apkarian (2018) concur with the views above when they state that there is a need for an approach that reflects a systemic change, bigger systemic aspects, and sustainability from the beginning.

## **1.2 Purpose of the study and research questions**

The purpose of this thesis is to explore and report how managers, on an operational level, manage a systemic change in the context of a public organization, which is going to be performed through a case study of the Armed Forces that is undergoing an organizational change during the targeting period of 2016-2020. The purpose is also to explore and report eventual factors that enable and hinder these managers from managing a systemic change in a public organization such as the Armed Forces. All of which is going to be performed by gathering qualitative data and the methodology of grounded theorizing.

In order to achieve the purpose as mentioned above of this thesis, the following research question will be answered:

***Grand research question***

How do managers, on an operational level, manage a systemic change in a public organization such as the Armed Forces?

***Support research question***

What are the factors that enable and hinder the managers, on an operational level, to manage a systemic change in a public organization such as the Armed Forces?

### **1.3 Structure of the study**

This thesis is organized as follows: Chapter 2 starts with an overview of the main concepts used in this thesis as well as present the case organization, the Swedish Armed Forces, and the case under study. Chapter 3 presents the theoretical framework, which consists of theories within insights in systems thinking, systemic change, and change management, followed by a conceptualization of systemic change management. Chapter 4 presents the methodology used in this thesis, which is a grounded theorizing case study approach where data has been generated through semi-structured theme interviews and analyzed through the method of grounded theorizing. Followed by an overall reflection on the research strategy. Chapter 5 presents the outcome of the research by presenting and analyzing the findings based on the focused categories and their respective concepts and relations to one another that emerged during the data analysis process. The chapter also explains how the outcomes of a grounded theorizing process should be presented and justifies the approach taken in this thesis. Finally, in chapter 6, the outcome of this thesis, an idea, is related to the existing literature as well as presents the conclusions based on the findings and discussion. The chapter also includes a description of this thesis limitation and suggestions for further research.

## **2 MAIN CONCEPTS AND THE CASE ORGANIZATION UNDER STUDY**

The following chapter aims to provide the reader an overview of this thesis main concepts: change, public management reform, and the management of change, followed by a short description of the Armed Forces and the case under study.

### **2.1 Change**

Ahrenfelt (2001) argue that it is a triviality to assert that the world is continually changing and that it would be a miracle if someone has managed to escape the word and concept of change. The author describes change as a continuous condition and a constant and ongoing process (Ahrenfelt, 2001). Several authors argue that change is something that can become a routine in its own as well as natural response to environmental and internal situations (cf. By, 2005; Leifer, 1989; Luecke, 2003). Dumas and Beinecke (2018, p. 869) explain change as "...complex, uncertain, and evolutionary, with continuous growth and development." Change is also explained as an inescapable phenomenon where "...the effects of even relatively minor changes in policy and attitude can appear in many guises" (Baker & Taylor, 2007, p. 2)

Organizational change can be understood as generated from a process of transformation that is either actively planned or arises naturally in which an organization or individual adapts or evolves (Baker & Taylor, 2007). Helms-Mills et al. (2009, p. 4) define organizational change as "...an alteration of a core aspect of an organization's operation, which includes aspects such as leadership, structure, technology, goals or personnel of an organization." A change to these elements can be a change in the thinking of a group or changing the way the production is organized, while an organizational reform can be expanding or closing selected departments (Helms-Mills et al., 2009).

Nonetheless, due to a growing amount of literature on the subject as well as the fact that the phenomenon can be manifested in countless forms, and varying degrees of depths, intensities, and scopes; change encompasses several different concepts, definitions, and terms, which can be approached from different perspectives (see, e.g., Leemans, 1976; Helms-Mills et al., 2009).

There are different types of changes and, hence, ways of managing them. However, by using the factors scale, planning, and frequency, researchers have the possibility to identify type of change and eventual models for managing a particular type of change. Firstly, the scale includes the size of the change. Secondly, a change can also be understood from the perspective of how

it comes about: planned or unplanned. Lastly, the frequency of a change can be identified to be either discontinuous or continuous. (Bamford & Forrester, 2003; Ha, 2014; UNDP, 2006). The following paragraphs describe the concepts of systemic change (scale), planned change (how it comes about), and discontinuous change (frequency).

The concept of *systemic change* is continuously defined as something that is sustainable and on a large scale (Taylor, 2016). Reiser and Dempsey (2007) also means that systemic change involves transforming or redesigning a whole system and is appropriate when the systems environment is undergoing enormous changes. Taylor (2016) refers to Abercrombie et al. (2015, p. 9) while stating that the definition of the concept is useful as it includes the aspect of sustainability and different components in a system:

*...an intentional process designed to alter the status quo by shifting the function or structure of an identified system with purposeful interventions...Systems change aims to bring about lasting change by altering underlying structures and supporting mechanisms which make the system operate in a particular way. These can include policies, routines, relationships, resources, power structures, and values.*

A systemic change includes the following aspects (1) redefining the vision, mission, and objectives; (2) adopting new organizational strategies; (3) restructuring the structure of the organization; (4) reshaping an organizations or industry's image; (5) changing the organizational culture and practice; and (6) making new policies and regulations. (Ha, 2014). Thus, this type of change affects the functions of the whole system. A systemic change can, for instance, includes gradual institutional reforms that are based on and aimed at transforming the fundamental qualities and principles of the system itself. (Reiser & Dempsey, 2007). The outcome of a systemic change is likely to be predefined since such changes generally are processes that are planned. (Schmidt et al., 2017).

Ha (2014, p. 21) define *planned change* as "...a proactive response, which aims to develop an organization's capabilities and core competencies in order to improve the organization's performance and achieve its business objectives". The planned approach means that one, usually, prior to the change process taking place, have predefined different actions that an organization will perform to go from the undesirable state to the identified desired state (Eldrod II & Tippett, 2002). The approach is, however, argued to be rather broad and has received criticism since the 1980s. Some of the criticism includes that it focuses on small-scale and incremental changes while discarding transformational and rapid changes as well as presumes

that all the people involved are both interested in and willing to implementing change. (By, 2005).

The successfulness connected to the frequency of change, whether *continuous*, on-going initiatives, or *discontinuous*, initiatives with an end-date, has been discussed by several authors (see e.g. Burnes, 1996; Grundy, 1993; Guimaraes & Armstrong, 1998; Luecke, 2003). Some scholars state that constant changes yield fewer desirable outcomes since routines are a necessity for employees to be productive and improve performance. Others argue that discontinuous changes may not be able to produce the desired outcome in the long run. (Ha, 2014).

## **2.2 Public management reform**

Governments adopt their organizations following changing conditions, opportunities, and demands, which in turn are dependent on factors such as the political and societal system and the stage of the national development. A concept that describes this type of revisions of administrative practices that all organizations engage in now and then is *public management reform*. (see e.g. Leemans, 1976). Pollitt and Bouckaert (2017, p. 2) describe the concept public management reform as "Deliberate attempts to change the structures, processes, and/or cultures of public sector organizations with the objective of getting them (in some sense) to run better".

Public management reforms can also be thought of as a change of structure and process. Changing the process may include redesigning a system in which, for instance, quality standards are implemented. Changing the structure, on the other hand, may include mergers or dissolving public sectors organizations, or, as Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004, p. 8) states: "...creating a smaller number of big departments to improve coordination or a larger number of small departments to sharpen focus and encourage specialization".

Nonetheless, several different definitions and understandings of public management exists. For instance, Perry and Kraemer (1983, p. x) define it as "...a merger of the normative orientation of traditional public administration and the instrumental orientation of general management". Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004) compare several different definitions of the concept public management to get an appreciation of their meanings and dimensions and find that it may be used in the senses of referring to structures and processes of a government, the activity of public servants or politicians, or a systematic study of either structures and processes or activities. (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004). Other concepts in close association with public management reform is *administrative reform* and *administrative change*. The latter is described as a self-

regulating response that organizations undertake to changing conditions. *Administrative reform*, on the other hand, describe the artificial stimulus of administrative transformation against resistance or as a change that is assisted including the main features of an administrative resistance. (Leemans, 1976).

There are several cases where public management reforms have gone wrong, as they have failed to produce the benefits it primarily claimed. Some cases even show that the public management reforms may generate an outcome that is worse than before. Additionally, many commentators notice that there is a delay in public management reforms. That is, the full benefits of massive changes in the processes and structures in public organization is usually not successfully implemented until 3-5 years, or more, after the launch of a reform program. The reason for this delay is due to factors such as to "...analyze the status quo, and subsequently to design, formulates, and refine new operating procedures, train staffs to work with them, define new roles and the appropriate rewards and appraisal systems, set new measurement systems in place... ...and work hard to reduce the anxiety all these novelties have probably caused, both among users and staff" (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004, pp. 6-7.)

### **2.3 The management of change**

As a result of the evolving environment surrounding organizations, such as deteriorating security levels and rapid advancements in different fields, organizations are facing tremendous forces to change their organizations accordingly. Consequently, a substantial number of different theories and approaches exist that leaders may use in times of change (Anderson, 2012; Helms-Mills et al., 2009; Holman et al., 2007; Kamara, 2018; Swedish Armed Forces, 2017). There is, however, no widely accepted, practical, and transparent approach to manage change (Burnes, 2004). Additionally, the field contains several current theories and approaches that are contradictory towards one another (By, 2005). Besides, the true recommendations of change and leadership literature have been largely ignored as it has been misinterpreted, misrepresented and misunderstood (see, e.g., Burnes et al., 2018; Burnes & Cooke, 2012). By (2005, p. 375) also argue that there are no collective procedures on how to lead and manage change as the sequences and steps of actions suggested by scholars are "...rather abstract in nature and difficult to apply in practice".

Burnes et al. (2018) argue that change and organizational leadership go hand in hand and is nothing without one another. Dumas and Beinecke (2017) mean that a *change leaders* ' role and duty is to inspire their organizations to participate, innovate, question, learn and prepare their

employees for a change. Ahrenfelt (2001) also argue that leadership is about governing the already ongoing process of change in which leaders should train their ability to follow, interpret and govern the process in the organization.

Helms-Mills et al. (2008, p. 125) presents the concepts of *transformational leaders* while discussing the implementation and management of change and cites Bass (1985) who mean that that they "...transcend short-term exchanges and goals by heightening followers' awareness about 'big picture' organizational goals, and issues." These theories are, however, not without issue. For instance, transformational leaders can be inhibited by contextual factors such as social and cultural transformation, technology, and national public policy. (Helms-Mills et al., 2008). Meaning that the context in which change is occurring can play an important part in the failure or success of the endeavor (see, e.g., Ahrenfelt, 2001; Dumas & Beinecke, 2017; Helms-Mills et al., 2008; Karp 2006).

Nonetheless, research within the field of change management are usually not including aspects of leadership in their studies even though it may have a crucial role in such a process (Kuipers et al., 2013; Gill, 2002; Fernandez & Rainey, 2006; Schmidt et al., 2017). However, theories in leadership linked to public management and public administration have developed considerably (see e.g. Van Wart, 2011) and various authors have stressed on the importance of leadership in connection to change management where specific attention has been given to the concept of leadership behavior (see e.g. Fernandez & Rainey 2006; Higgs & Rowland, 2005, Kotter, 1996; Schmidt et al., 2017).

Higgs and Roland (2005) analyzed leadership behaviors during organizational changes and found three overall behaviors that they do during these types of situations (1) shape behavior; (2) frame change; and (3) create capacity. Shape behavior, the first aspect, refers to them providing a roadmap or plan for the organizations wherein they offer a way in how they can reach at the desired end-state that consists of the milestones and goals that should be reached. The second aspect, frame change, is when the manager's use framing to influence employees that changes are unavoidable. The last aspect, capacity creation, means that managers, for instance, hires an external consultant or borrows employees from other departments or units (Schmidt et al., 2017).

Some scholars argue that there is a difference between the concepts of management and leadership, but the eventual differences between those concepts is, however, not problematized in this study since a distinction between them is irrelevant. Nevertheless, as the phenomenon



of interest in this thesis is managing change on an operational level in the context of a public organization, a short description of operational leveled managers overall task is described in the following paragraph.

Managers on an operational level are, in general, the ones overseeing the efforts of the workforce and operating the schedule of actions desired from the staff. Typical main functions of managers on this level is as follows (1) they are the link between middle management and the employees; (2) they maintain the quality of output in the organization; (3) they guide and direct the employees; (4) they supervise the work of the employees; (5) they maintain discipline among the employees; and (6) arrange for training at the workplace. (see e.g. Larsson, 2008.)

## **2.4 The case organization: The Swedish Armed Forces**

The Armed Forces is a government agency placed under the command of the Swedish Ministry of Defense. The organization is subjected to a bureaucratic chain of command through the linkage to the parliament and government who are the ones that decide the Armed Forces budget, goals, tasks, and structure. Thus, the organization includes a bureaucratic structure with a distinct hierarchy and vertical flow (see, e.g., Swedish Armed Forces, 2017). The organization's mission is to defend the national security, support international peacekeeping, and promote Sweden's interests and to provide humanitarian aid. The core value of the organization is to protect, help and save. (Dandeker & Gow, 1999; Swedish Armed Forces, 2018a).

### ***The organization's overall organizational structure and line-management***

General Bydén is currently the Armed Forces Supreme Commander. The organization's Headquarters (HQ) is the department directly subordinate to the General. The HQ has the task to support General Bydén in fulfilling the organization's goals and tasks by analyzing and planning the tasks given by the Parliament and the Government, which is later distributed through orders to the organization's units such as Army, Air Force, Navy, and Logistics. These organizational units are all geographically spread out across Sweden (Swedish Armed Forces, n.d.a; Swedish Armed Forces, internal documents). The HQ consists of several departments, such as the Production Management Department that, in turn, consists of sub-departments. The majority of activities are governed and led from Stockholm as the organization's structure and line leadership are based on peace efficiency (centralized leadership), effective until the end of 2018. (Swedish Armed Forces, 2017, internal documents.)

Colonel Granander is the Swedish Armed Forces Logistics (which I refer to hereafter as *Armed Forces Logistics*) Commander in Chief, who answers directly to the Armed Forces Supreme Commander, General Bydén. The Armed Forces Logistics task is to provide logistic support to the Armed Forces operations. For instance, the Armed Forces Logistics ensures the functions of transports and communications within the Armed Forces, such as providing the right materials and keeping it in good shape for the other organizations and service branches. In other words, the support from the Armed Forces Logistics to the Armed Forces consists of providing services and taking care of the supplies needed for the Armed Forces to successfully manage its tasks. (Swedish Armed Forces, n.d.b., n.d.c, internal documents.)

The Armed Forces Logistics is geographically spread around Sweden and divided into four military regions. Tasks provided by the HQ is analyzed and planned by the Armed Forces Logistics Central Department that is the organizations Commander in Chief direct subordinated department. The Central Department is located in Stockholm and consists on several sub-departments such as the Implementation department, which are the ones who officially distributes orders to the Armed Forces Logistics Sub-Unit Managers who are in charge of a specific area around the country. However, the Sub-Unit Managers are also provided tasks and governed by other sub-departments in the Armed Forces Logistics organization, such as the Logistics Department, which focuses on organizational development issues. (Swedish Armed Forces, internal documents.)

The Armed Forces Logistics Sub-Unit Managers responsibility is to support Colonel Granander in fulfilling the goals of the unit, which is primarily executed through the operational and supporting staff. (Swedish Armed Forces, n.d.b, n.d.c). The Armed Forces Logistics Sub-Unit Manager for the Third National Support Unit (3.NSU) supports the Armed Forces Logistics Commander in Chief, Colonel Granander, in fulfilling the logistics tasks in the northern military region in Sweden, which is the sub-unit where data for this thesis is gathered from. The 3.NSU consists of different departments, such as the Management Department, which is the department directly subordinated under the manager of the 3.NSU. The department's main task is to support the 3.NSU manager in the planning of short- and long-term production and resources to achieve the distributed tasks from the Armed Forces Logistics Commander in Chief. This support is fulfilled through analyzing orders distributed by Colonel Grananders direct subordinated department and then, further distributing altered orders to the managers in the Service Centers that are effective on an operational level. The managers at the Service Centers have the task to support the manager of the 3.NSU in fulfilling the Armed Forces Logistics Commander in

Chiefs goals for the organization. This support is executed, for instance, by providing different services to the other organizations in the Armed Forces. (Swedish Armed Forces, internal documents).

### ***The organization's overall culture***

The culture, a distinctive manner of living that makes individuals to philosophize and act in certain ways in organizations, in the Armed Forces is unique (Dandeker & Gow, 1999; Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2002). Organizations can include cultures of both informal and formal natures. The formal culture of a military organization includes (1) the vision as stated in the mission; (2) the policies that guide for action; (3) the specific procedures that guides action such as to not talk to people outside the organization, and foremost reporters, about eventual failures without first discussing it with the military chain of command; and (4) specific rules or prohibitions. The informal culture, on the other hand, includes aspects of shared values and believes, things that are neither evident nor endorsed in the formal culture. The Armed Forces certainly includes similarities in culture in comparison to civil organizations. For instance, both sectors point to the importance of cooperation, leadership, and loyalty to both the organization and its mission. Nonetheless, the Armed Forces comprise a distinctive culture and subsequent contract with the employees. For instance, the employees have to be prepared to fight, as well as to subordinate and sacrifice oneself for the group and for the common good. Coercion can also be applied in the organization, which is what makes the military different from other organizations, since structure and commands for giving and getting of orders can be placed upon its employees. (Dandeker & Gow, 1999).

## **2.5 The ongoing changes in the case organization during the period of 2016-2020**

In 2015, the government presented an official statement that the goals of Total Defense were heading for a change since there was a need for a "stronger defense". The government stated that the security situation in Europe had deteriorated and that the plan for the Armed Forces heightened preparedness, a phase of crisis and war, thus, had been resumed. The parliament and government stated that a new organizational structure and line management structures was necessary as there was a need to increase the robustness and stamina in leadership skills in the Armed Forces. They also meant that there was a need to simplify and clarify the management conditions in the organization and, hence, suggested that the management resources was to be geographically distributed and decisions decentralized as it increases the opportunities for the

various organizations in the Armed Forces to replace and support each other when necessary. The government stated that the current and single most crucial defense policy was to ensure a (1) collective ability of the Total Defense; and (2) increase operative effect during the targeting period of 2016-2020. Meaning that the organization currently is transforming the whole system while going from a phase of peace (deployment defense) to a phase of crisis and war (defense) (Swedish Armed Forces, 2017, 2018b; The Government, 2015). In practice, this means that the organization has been, and is, undergoing different organizational changes during the targeting period of 2016-2020. The following two paragraphs provide examples on some of these changes.

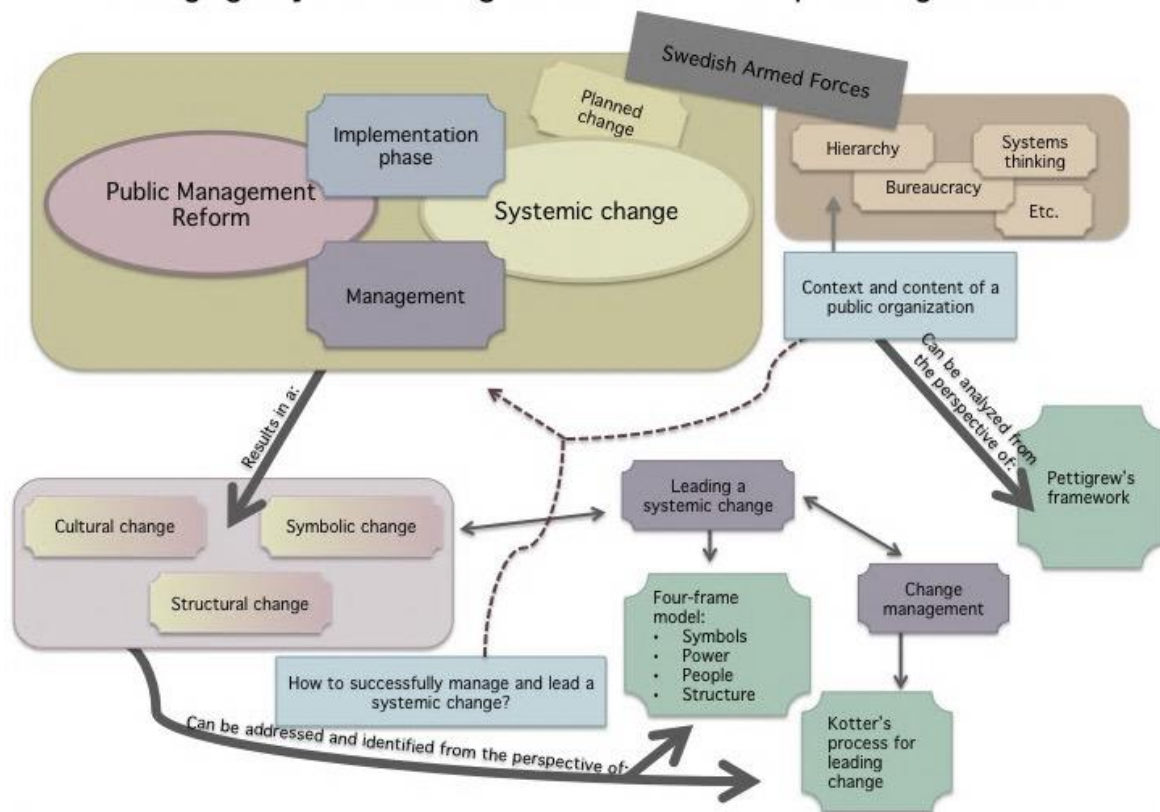
The Armed Forces Logistics organization was developed and implemented in the Armed Forces in 2002 and upheld until 2018. Initially, the logistics organization was a peace organization, which meant that the personnel working for the organization neither had contracts nor war placement orders that could be coerced upon them by their superiors. In 2016, the parliament and government decided that the organization was going to be a crisis and war organization. In practice this mainly meant that the organizational rules changed where all personnel, military, and civilians, were ordered for mandatory international duty and provided war placement orders, security levels heightened, as well as that the civil public servants had to undergo military training and security educations. In 2018, the organization had a majority of civilian employments. In the context of the Armed Forces Logistics, personnel having civilian employment consists of both civilian people coming from outside of the organization, such as the university, other public organizations, or the private market, as well as military personnel that is employed as civilians. (The Government, 2018a, 2018b; Swedish Armed Forces, internal documents.)

Another example was that the whole Armed Forces underwent a reform that officially took place during 2018, which the government commissioned and committed to the government's budget proposal for 2018 on February 8th, 2018 (The Government, 2018a, 2018b). The organization's new structure was implemented on the 1st of January 2019 (The Government, 2018a). The reorganization included a merger of the tactical level, production- and deployment management departments, which was placed under the Defense Branches Army, Navy, and Air Force. Meaning that other organizational units, such as parts of the Armed Forces Logistics, was dismantled and placed under the defense branches. Additionally, some of the tasks and personnel in the civil organizations in the Total Defense, such as the Swedish Defense Material Organization and Fortifications Administration, were “coming back” to the Armed Forces. One

of the main aims of the reorganization was to create a more straightforward and more explicit condition for management and obedience while at the same time decentralize decisions, making the lead times shorter as well as relationships between management more natural and more apparent. (Swedish Armed Forces, 2017, internal documentation).

Concluding chapter two, public organizations continuously have to undergo organizational changes, but the failure rate of all initiated change programs is identified to be relatively high despite a tremendous amount of different literature and approaches on how organizational changes may be managed (Armenakis & Bederian, 1999; Beer & Nohria, 2006; Burke & Friedman, 2011; Try & Randor, 2007). The reasons and attributes for the rather high failure rate may be due to several different reasons, such as employee apathy, inadequate management support, inappropriate organizational culture, poor communication, poor leadership, and inappropriate planning (Mosadeghrad & Ansarian, 2014). Nevertheless, it can be agreed that the percentage indicates a lack of a framework of how one can successfully manage change within organizations, which is something that is stated by several authors (see e.g. Reinholz & Apkarian, 2018; Schmidt et al., 2017; By, 2005). It is also argued that the context in which change is occurring plays a vital role in the failure and success of such an endeavor (see, e.g., Ahrenfelt, 2001; Dumas & Beinecke, 2017; Helms-Mills et al., 2008; Karp, 2006). Managing change on an operational level can be understood to be influenced by economic and political forces, the characteristics of the organization, and the activities in a local setting (see e.g. Li et al., 2018). Reinholz and Apkarian (2018) means that there is a need for an approach that considers broader systemic factors and sustainability from the outset and presents a four-frame model (structure, symbols, people, power, and culture) for informing such an approach. The phenomenon of managing a systemic change on an operational level in the context of a public organization provides, in my opinion, an interesting framework in consideration to several factors (see figure 1). Some of these factors include the Armed Forces background and current on-going systemic change, the challenge of leading change, a field that has been argued to contain a lack of empirical evidence how organizational change can be successfully lead in public organizations, and current literature that is mutually contradictory in which the correct recommendations is misinterpreted, misrepresented and misunderstood (Burnes & Cooke, 2012; Burnes et al., 2018; By, 2005; Sousa & Voss, 2002; Swedish Quality Management Academy, 2012; Van der Voet, 2014).

## Managing a systemic change in the context of a public organization



**Figure 1.** This thesis phenomenon, key concepts and their relations to one another.

### **3 MANAGING A SYSTEMIC CHANGE**

This thesis uses grounded theorizing as a research strategy and tool for organizing the analytical categories. Meaning that the selected research area is analyzed in an unbiased manner to find the behaviors, aspects, and eventual problem that it generates (Sandberg, 2007). A researcher using the methodology of grounded theorizing is not supposed to read existing theories prior to the data analysis process. Thus, it is of necessity to explain how the theoretical framework has materialized during this study.

Many methodologies require an extensive literature review on already existing theories and models before carrying out own research in a field. Grounded theorizing, however, advises against engagement with existing literature before collecting data as the idea is to not begin with an existing theory or preconceived ideas and later on force it on the data to verify them as the methodology aims at to produce a theory grounded on the data. Instead, in grounded theorizing, the researcher is supposed to find patterns in the gathered data and, thus, in an unbiased manner be led to a new, grounded theory. During the process of grounded theorizing, existing theories are evaluated wherein theories that fits with the developing theory is integrated with it. In this manner, the developing theory is elaborated and enriched, and grounded in the data. (Timonen et al., 2018; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Such advice, however, goes against current institutional requirements and conventions, and several authors argue about the importance of engaging with present literature in order to provide the researcher a point of departure, to delimit the topic, and justify research questions (Timonen et al., 2018; Gustavsson, 1998). A researcher starting in a blank slate is no longer a realistic proposition and reading the literature prior to the data collection is currently considered as useful rather than a hindrance, provided that the researcher remains open to their data as the essential premises is to remain open toward existing theories, which can be done more productively with such awareness (Timonen et al., 2018).

As will be further explained in the methods chapter, I performed overall research on the phenomenon of systemic change and management during the starting phase of this thesis to get a somewhat point of departure and delimit the topic, as well as, in particular, find some themes to focus on in the interviews. However, I consciously tried to not read too much literature before the interviews and coding phases as I aspired to follow the principles of grounded theorizing, which means that this chapter has been developed simultaneously as the processes of emergence and discovery as well as data analysis (Glaser, 1992; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to present a theoretical overview focusing on the topics of

systemic change, change management, and insights in systems thinking that emerged during those processes.

### **3.1 Insights from systems thinking**

The practice of systems thinking has been an alternative means for understanding complex systems, which, in turn, has developed different tools and techniques such as situational perspectives or according to disciplinary influences. System thinking represents a process for learning about a reality that is complex, leading to a framework for practice. The ability to understand how this influence the system is critical in systems thinking, which can be performed by sharing interpretations through actions of exchanging information between one another during dialogues, and to be open towards constructive criticism and learning. In other words, it is about engaging a framework for mutual understanding through connectivity, mediated through communication and dialogue between one another. (Bodhanya, 2016).

A system is "an integrated assembly of interacting components designed to carry out cooperatively a predetermined function" (Potocki & Brocato, 1995, p. 403). From an organizational context, this includes an array of people, technology, materials, and processes, composed to complete a function that is meaningful and offers a specific aim, such as a service. (Potocki & Brocato, 1995).

There is a variety of literature that deals with institutional changes, such as change management and systems change. These approaches are, however, based on the idea that systems are symmetric and stable. Meaning that they treat the organizations as an automatic system that achieves stability. From this perspective, change means that a system is altered to achieve a new steadiness wherein the principal supposition is that the change occurs by design. Change methodologies from this view imply that there are rational human actors that understands the system, reflects what the underlying problems are, and designs interventions to change the system to eliminate the problem. These types of methods to change are, however, confounded when dealing with large-scale systems. (Bodhanya, 2016).

Large-scale systems change usually deal with aspects within the areas of social policy and decision-making. From a single organization perspective, however, this may include aspects of organizational strategy, organizational development, change management, or strategic change. These aspects have to do with the future evolution of the organization's survival, competitiveness, or the achievement of public mandate in a future environment in which the expectancies are that there is an obligation for changing critical aspects of the arrangement of



the organization. From a systems perspective, it is essential to understand that an organization have sub-systems and relationships with one another as well as includes different human activity and social-technical systems. The human activity systems are essential during times of organizational change, which includes the ordinary lives of people and the social issues that may influence them. (Bodhanya, 2016). A principle in systems thinking is that the structure of the system drives its behavior (Senge, 1990). The structure of the system comprises the unpremeditated and non-linear relationship between the variables that have a chain of cause and effect, embedded in positive and negative feedback loops that, in turn, fosters a dynamic complexity. (Bodhanya, 2016; Senge, 1990).

From a systems perspective, the concept of organization is considered as a complex phenomenon and not order, predictability, and control. The latter concepts derive from a reductionist perspective, which believes that someone can plan, predict, and control how organizations should and can perform if it is reduced to a series of parts. This perspective is, however, thought to be inadequate in proving a complete description of a complex phenomenon. (Bodhanya, 2016). Kahane (2004) means that commands and control do not work during situations of change and that it is imperative to be both receptive and adaptive to ideas as well as to be ready to move past boundaries of “normal” practice or comfort zones, which is a difficult task as humans have a self-reflective consciousness by nature. (Taylor, 2016). Nevertheless, there has been an increasing realization that organizations can be better understood and described in terms of a system that contains elements that are interconnected, each and one influencing one another. (Bodhanya, 2016).

Peter Senge answered some questions in dynamic systems thinking in business during an interview done by Gaffney (1985) and meant that progress is made when people understands clearly that everything is interconnected and that the likelihood of figuring out life is small. Ultimately, Senge means that systemic change is the process of reformulating the minds of the people as they need to view the world as free from hierarchy as well as that groups and organizations should come together and have a dialogue together to develop a shared vision and gain a systemic understanding of their current experience of their reality (Bodhanya, 2016; Gaffney, 1985).

### **3.2 Systemic change**

Systemic change, as presented by Reiser and Dempsey (2007) involves transforming or redesigning a whole system. This type of change is required when efforts to change one aspect of a system fails to fix a problem, leading to the necessity to, for instance, transform a whole system. Hence, the change affects the functions of a whole system. Examples can be gradual institutional reforms based on and aimed to transform the fundamental qualities and principles of the system itself. (Reiser & Dempsey, 2007). Adelman and Taylor (2007, p. 57) define this type of change as something that "...involves modifications that amount to a cultural shift in institutionalized values (i.e., reculturalization)."

During times of change, consulting and involving are required to those who are affected by the change. There is no one size fits all approach to manage change as all organizations have a unique community and own, structure, culture, history, and needs. All changes events are different and there may also be different cultures within an organization comprising of different subcultures and perspectives, which is dependent on each and every individual. Hence, it is difficult to determine that an organization has "one single culture." Nevertheless, there is some cohesion in how people in an organization interact with one another, and it is essential to recognize that there are areas of cohesion but also dissimilarity. (Adelman & Taylor, 2007; Reinholz & Apkarian, 2018.)

#### ***Analyzing systemic change in a public organization***

Systemic change is complex and dynamic by nature as it is one of the most complex forms of institutional changes since it intends to influence a whole structure or character of a government (Ghavifekr & Hussin, 2011; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004; Wagener, 1993). The four-frame model as presented by Reinholz and Apkarian (2018), initially developed by Bolman and Deal (2008) but from a business perspective, provide researchers the possibility to both address and identify questions of both what one aims to change (the product), and how one is going about to change something (the process) through a four-frame model from a public perspective. The frame includes the subjects of structure, symbols, people, and power, which are the standing legs of the mainframe, culture. (Reinholz & Apkarian, 2018). The following sub-section presents and elaborates the four-frame model as presented by Reinholz and Apkarian (2018) as well as some of the systemic change perspectives of Adelman and Taylor (2007).

Reinholz & Apkarian (2018) means that the four pillars of structure, symbols, people, and power to support a cultural change needs to be addressed during systemic changes. The concept

of *culture* is, however, difficult to define, measure, and understand, but an essential component for the change process to successfully proceed. Reinholz and Apkarian (2018, p. 3) define the term culture as a "...historical and evolving set of structures and symbols and the resulting power relationships between people." Culture is something that evolves continuously over time, entwined to the historical development of the, for instance, organization and its past culture. Meaning that a cultural change is inevitable as its responses to external stimuli (Reinholz & Apkarian, 2018.)

The first pillar in the four-frame model, *structure*, consists of responsibilities, roles, practices, incentives, and routines, which organizes how people interact. From a public organizations context, structures appear in, for instance, policies and formal positions such as different levels of ranking scales (Swedish Armed Forces, n.d.a; Swedish Armed Forces, n.d.e; Reinholz & Apkarian, 2018). According to Reinholz & Apkarian (2018), there is a need to focus on and change the structures that define an organization to come to a sustainable change, which can be done by concentrating on positive and broad outcomes to be achieved. Similarly, Adelman and Taylor (2007) argue that managers need to ensure that there is an infrastructure that maintains and enhances beneficial changes.

Adelman and Taylor (2007) argue that it, in addition to existing infrastructure mechanisms, managers should establish change teams and strategies that facilitate a systemic change. Nevertheless, the authors state:

*It is rare to find situations where a well-designed systemic change infrastructure is in place. More characteristically, ad hoc mechanisms have been set in motion with personnel who have too little training and without adequate formative evaluation. It is common to find structures (e.g., teams, collaborates) operating without a clear understanding of functions and major tasks that must be accomplished. (Adelman & Taylor, 2007, p. 65).*

Reinholz & Apkarian (2018) means that individuals tend to focus on problems rather than the preferred solution, which results in inflexibility. This type of behavior usually leads to the opposite of fixes, which does not add to a coherent whole. However, focusing on the outcomes alters the "nature of the conversation" that allow groups to grasp future opportunities rather than obstacles. Building a community of engagement enables people to discuss with one another and see things from another perspective. (Reinholz & Apkarian, 2018.)

The four-frame model also highlights the importance of both support and incentives, such as promotion or tenure, in the process of change as these types of value is understood as a driver

of behavior. (Reinholz & Apkarian, 2018). Likewise, Adelman and Taylor (2007) argue that change processes should include incentives. The authors also argue that the majority of change failures are due to the lack of attention and time to create a strategy to enable the employees to be ready towards the changes as well as to accommodate changes of leadership and staff. According to Adelman and Taylor (2007), some of the most relevant points to enhance a “change readiness” are (1) a commitment in policy that is altered into suitable resources (leadership, space, budget, and time); (2) incentives for change, including identified expectations for accomplishment, acknowledgment, and rewards; (3) enthusiasm to create devices and processes that enables efforts of change; (4) achieving change in stages and within credible timelines; (5) continuous feedback on progress; and (6) institutionalizing mechanisms that support the maintenance and evolvement of changes.

The second pillar in the four-frame model, *symbols*, comprise of language, cultural artifacts, knowledge, values, myths, and vision. Reinholz & Apkarian (2018, 4) define symbols as "...the underlying ways of thinking that give meaning to the structures that exist within a department." A symbol can, for example, be a department meeting, which is something that exists across all organizations. The implementation of these department meetings varies based on how the members of the department value the meetings and understand its meaning. For instance, some departments may not expect their members to attend the meetings as they mostly serve as the first way of a departments' leader to inform about an already made decision while another department may expect all members to attend the meetings as decisions are being made democratically during those meetings. Structural shifts necessitate a symbolic shift for a change that is meaningful to result. For example, if a change initiative focuses on beliefs and attitudes, it may be negatively met, such as hostility, as it suggests that there is something wrong with the present manners of thinking in a department. Hence, a symbolic shift is of essentiality but will occur most easily as part of a more significant change process. (Reinholz & Apkarian, 2018.)

An organization consists of *people*, which is the third pillar in the four-frame model. According to Reinholz and Apkarian (2018), people have their agency, needs, identities, and goals. The four-frame model stresses the fact that communities have a common ground but is still encompassed by individuals with their own personal and professional commitments, such as social justice and equity. The numerous interacting and complex identities of the people within an organization are essential to consider when changes are contemplated in an organization. The frame highlights the multifaceted and occasionally different experiences and perceptions

within an organization. Meaning that the culture of an organization is not considered the same for all people all the time. (Reinholz & Apkarian, 2018.)

The people frame directs agents of change to take solutions into consideration that represent a collective vision that focuses on the participants' goals, needs, and individualities. In doing so, a group can come together to develop shared objectives that include individual concerns and goals. In addition, a shared vision for an organization or unit may assist in shaping the course of future change initiatives to support the desires of the people working there as well as construct consistency amongst the ideals and objectives. In this manner, individuals may, in a more natural manner, see areas of cohesion between their goals that else would not be apparent. (Reinholz & Apkarian, 2018). Similarly, Adelman and Taylor (2007) stress on the importance of constructing capability, and especially to develop the personnel and strategies that attend the employees' mobility as well as to identify and establish the nature and scope of a change initiative as it both helps shape the direction, as well as set the boundaries.

The people working in an organization should also be attended to during the making of process-related decisions in change initiatives. Reinholz & Apkarian (2018) means that the agency of individuals working at the organization is essential to take into consideration in this aspect. From this perspective, the agency is related to the people's ability to influence their circumstances. Agency is a driver of motivation and links to the fulfillment of basic human needs. Reinholz & Apkarian (2018, 5) states "If department members are simply handed a solution and expected to implement it with fidelity, success is unlikely to result." The authors argue that success is more likely to occur when people are provided high support and expectations as well as space to work for improvements creatively. Meaning that people leading a change should work both with and for their independence as it allows them to take ownership of innovation efforts. (Reinholz & Apkarian.)

Interactions between people working in an organization are mediated by factors such as positioning, status, and *power*, which is the last pillar of the four-frame model. Aspects of identity, such as formal roles, success, and status within a particular field, gender, or ability status are so-called power differences that may arise in an organization. The current power structure influence decision-making and people and is, hence, something that must be recognized. The ones initiating the change must, in meaningful ways, include the employees early on, or else, an unnecessary effort is invested, as it does not lead to anything. (Reinholz & Apkarian, 2018). Nevertheless, research has shown that the success of various change initiatives

is dependent of the interventions that inspire employees and increase their feeling of togetherness (Adelman & Taylor, 2007; Beeker et al., 1998; Trickett, 2002).

Building real success or early wins is key as change is time-consuming. Issues of power, however, influence the process of change as, for instance, the success of a change initiative requires authorizations from suitable power holders. The people that hold this type of power are usually in a formal position in which they have the authority to make those kinds of decisions, or, are highly respected thought leaders. The combination of the existing hierarchy in the Swedish Armed Forces and the fact that it is a public organization means that a specific group makes the ultimate decisions. However, the people leading a change can make a deliberate solution that unsettles this hierarchy. Reinholz & Apkarian (2018, 5) means that one should include more perspectives by involving representatives of traditionally marginalized groups in the decision-making process or the development of a shared vision. Similarly, a more significant distribution of power can be accomplished by merely creating a formal structure that involves the voices of individuals with different levels of power. (Reinholz & Apkarian, 2018.)

### **3.3 Change management**

Change management is a continuously on-going process to renew an organizations framework, resources, and direction to meet the needs of the continually changing environment (Moran & Brightman, 2000). Change management perspectives enable researchers to highlight possible managerial challenges and focus on organizational or inter-organizational levels (Gill, 2002; Schmidt et al., 2017). Change management is a process that is both challenging and unavoidable. It is a continuous process that necessitates a manager to comprise the skillsets of planning, coordination, organizing, and controlling as extensive organizational changes are probable to affect working conditions, the structure of the organization's decision-making, and work-related attitudes. (Schmidt et al., 2017; Ha, 2014).

Ha (2014, pp. 1-2) explains organizational change management as “...planning, organizing, leading, and controlling a change process in an organization to improve its performance and achieve the predetermined sets of strategic objectives” including the use of different techniques, mechanisms, and instruments to handle the human and technical elements of a change initiative. Other scholars state that organizational change management also include other deliberate activities of managers, such as aspects of coordination and leading the process of implementing change (Gill, 2002; Schmidt et al., 2017). From this perspective, a manager is considered as a driver of change (see e.g. Kotter, 1995; Meier & O'Toole, 2012). Beech and MacIntosh (2012)

describes change management in another manner and means that it is the basis of having personal skills to handle the assessment of situations as well as to adjust and learn from previous occurrences.

There is a high volume of research concerning (organizational) change management, which creates an absolute lack of clarity and confusion in the literature for someone new in the field. Thus, the following sub-sections aim to recognize this situation to clarify the backbone of this thesis understanding and approach to change management and related terms.

### ***Analyzing change management in public organizations***

As with other theories, change management is criticized to be divided and incapable to provide analytical frameworks that researchers can use in their studies (Kuipers et al., 2013; Vann, 2004). There are different change management models, but there are two models that have been discussed by several authors in particular: the planned and unplanned change model. (Ha, 2014). Some of the more acclaimed change management models is John Kotter's eight-step model (2011) and the framework presented by Pettigrew (1985) and Pettigrew et al. (2001). Other scholar's worth mentioning is Luecke's (2003) seven-step model called the linear approach, Hamel's (2000) insurrection method, and Dawson and Andriopoulos (2014) model for managing change, creativity and innovation.

The framework, *context, content, process, outcomes, and leadership*, as presented by Kuipers et al. (2013), initially developed by Pettigrew (1985) and Pettigrew et al. (2001), provide researchers a possibility to both address and identify influencing factors during organizational changes in public organizations. The following sub-section presents and elaborates the framework as presented by Kuipers et al. (2013) as well as some connecting perspectives presented by other scholars such as Leemans (1976), Burnes (2009), Coram and Burnes (2001), Van der Voet et al. (2016), Pollitt and Bouckaert (2017), and Groeneveld and Van de Walle (2011).

Context is of vital importance to take into consideration during, for instance, research on organizational changes in the public sector as the specific characteristics of a public organization, such as bureaucracy, may have a consequence for the successful management of organizational change. Public organizations are dependent and influenced by their surrounding environment, such as the global political climate (see e.g. Leemans, 1976; Burnes, 2009; Coram & Burnes, 2001; Van der Voet, 2016). The factors in the framework developed by Pettigrew (1985) and Pettigrew et al. (2001) and altered by Kuipers et al. (2013) enable researchers to

identify the specific features related to change in the context of public organizations within the phenomenon of change. The framework initially developed by Pettigrew (1985) and Pettigrew et al. (2001) stresses the importance of including context, content, process, and outcomes during an analysis of change. Additionally, Kuipers et al. (2013) took inspiration from the general literature reviews on change management from the private sector and added the factor of leadership into the framework.

The first factor, the *context* of change, appoint to the internal and external environment of an organization, such as the background of the case under analysis and different aspects such as institutional setting, time, and political-administrative environment. The context is essential to take into consideration from the perspective of the individuality between the public and private sectors and especially when studying public management. (Schmidt et al., 2017; Fernandez & Rainey, 2006; Boyne, 2006). The public sector differentiates itself from the private sector in aspects such as the political-administrative setting, which might have an impact in both the choice and employment of public managers. These aspects are some of the things that may influence a change or reform within a public organization. (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004). Groeneveld and Van de Walle (2011) mean that time, institutional setting, and political-administrative environment; include the context, which affects both the content and process of an organizational change.

*Content*, the second factor, refers to "...what is changed..." along with the organization's systems, schemes, and structure, as well as why the change is required (Schmidt et al., 2017, p. 1543). One common reason for the latter has been to increase efficiency that has from a political and organizational point of view, which is, more often than not, seen as the most popular way of making savings. Making efficiency gains is more commonly connected to organizational changes as it usually leads to this conclusion, which may or may not involve some risks (Pollitt, 2010).

The third factor, the *process* of change, includes the involvement and processes performed during the implementation of change. The *outcome*, the fourth factor, is the outcome that result after implementing change, which can be unintended or intended as well as negative or positive. These factors, process and outcome, is innately linked and, hence, discussed together. (Kuipers et al., 2013.)

The process of change can be explained in several different perspective and manners, but one usual manner within the change management literature is to define a change as unplanned or



planned, concepts described earlier in this thesis. Nevertheless, as a reminder, the latter process of change refers to an organizational change that is implemented in a top-down manner through "...power authority and hierarchical structure" (Packard et al., 2008, p. 118). During such a process, change initiatives are imposed and derived by an organization's top management where the organizational change is brought forward after the description of the objectives and managers usually attempt to convince their employees of the value of the change through highlighting what the change entails (Van der Voet et al., 2014; Schmidt et al., 2017).

A necessary condition to implement an organizational change in a successful manner is to have the support for it, which is something that the change management literature often mentioned (see e.g. Kotter, 1996; Fernandez & Rainey, 2006). Support and resistance to change may be something that both appear during, and because of, the process of change as well as a result of the change (Schmidt et al., 2017). On the other end, Jarrett (2003) means that the roots of resistance towards change usually is fear and survival. Nevertheless, the literature within change management state that there is a possibility to ensure support if the following success factors for change is adopted: communication, participation, and involvement. (Schmidt et al., 2017).

Managers who communicate the reason for the inevitability of change has a bigger chance to ensure the support needed for the change process to proceed successfully. It is also of vital importance that managers build internal support for the anticipated change for the whole organization. It is essential to avoid gossip and rumors about the changes through high-quality communication. (Schmidt et al., 2017). To have employees that participates in the change is also important as they, thus, are more likely committed to the change. (Van der Voet et al., 2014). Employees that participates in the change process not only creates support for change, but it is also a beneficial practice, as employees on an operational level have a better understanding of the operations since they are the ones ultimately delivering public services (Dunsire & Hood, 1989). Nevertheless, it is essential to take this type of involvement sincerely as taking it unserious might be counterproductive and lead to a waste of time and resources as well as declining morale (Fernandez & Rainey, 2006). To have employees that participates in the change process can, however, result in two very different outcomes: the employers may either suppress eventual resistance and clarify what is going on or fuel the resistance and protective behavior by people feeling threatened. (Schmidt et al., 2017).

The framework (context, content, process, outcomes, and leadership) presented by Kuipers et al. (2013) is based on the idea that the *managers or leaders*, the last factor, have a role that is central and vital to employ a change in the context of change in a public organization. More specifically, the managers are considered as the center of resource flows, personal loyalty, and networks of information. Public managers may also be considered to influence the outcomes of change initiatives since they are the ones that manage the content and process of change. (Kuipers et al., 2013.)

Change management is a field that has been studied and analyzed for years by a tremendous amount and different school of scholars, as well as have been tested in practice in different sections. Hence, different perspectives on change management currently exist. The Kotter Eight-Step Process (2011) can, however, be successfully used for analyzing military transformations, but needs some necessary adaptations for the nuances found in such public organizations, such as bureaucracy. (see e.g. Kamara, 2018). The following sub-chapter presents Kotter's (2011) perspective in leading change.

### ***Kotter's eight-step process for leading change***

Kotter's eight-step model for leading a change is a holistic approach and methodology for successful management to realize a change that lasts over time. The approach supports the idea to build a long-lasting and robust incentive that inspires individuals and energizes activities that are both helpful and certifying. Coordinating change activities in accordance to the eight-step process attentively and persistently can help fulfill a lasting, supportive, and viable change. The following phases and aspects are considered to be of importance in the Kotter's Eight-Step Process for leading change: (1) to develop a sense of urgency; (2) to construct a guiding alliance; (3) to create a strategic vision and initiative; (4) to recruit a 'volunteer army'; (5) to empower action by removing barriers; (6) to generate short-term wins; (7) to sustain acceleration; and (8) to institute change. (Kotter, 2011.)

The first phase (pre-phase) of Kotter's eight-step model, to *develop a sense of urgency*, stress on the importance to unfreeze the status quo by identifying and explaining the reasons for the change to the organization, which is needed to recruit and inspire change supporters both within and outside the organization. (Kotter, 2011; Kamara, 2018). To create a sense of urgency does not entail a long list of things to be done, but rather to have the desire to find a solution and understanding that something is imperative. Luecke (2000) and Hamel (2000) also highlight

the importance of commitment and mobilizing energy in the starting phase of a change initiative.

The second phase (pre-phase) of Kotter's eight-step model highlight the importance to *construct a guiding alliance* that contain a core group of people that is supposed to distribute the strategic vision of the change, committed to both communicate and spread the vision of the change. (Kamara, 2018). One of the main goals with this phase is to form a group that is skilled, devoted, and powerful enough to lead the change process (Kotter, 1996; Ha, 2014). In many cases, this group consists of influential members and is a diverse group of individuals from different areas of an organization that has different skills, capacities, and intellect. (Kamara, 2018).

*Create a strategic vision and initiative*, the third phase (pre-phase) of Kotter's eight-step model, stress that a successful change need a vision of the future that is both easy to communicate and understand, which is vital to enrich a fast and extensive support for change (Kamara, 2018). In other words, an essential leadership component is to provide one's employers with an appealing picture of the future as well as to make them understand how that vision can be achieved (Kotter, 2011).

As mentioned beforehand, several change management models have been presented by different authors including different perspectives on activities that should or should not be performed during the pre-phase of a change process. For instance, Bevan (2011) and Jabri (2012) means that external parties should receive additional input in the post-phase of a change initiative. In conclusion, although different authors of change management focus on various things, the core essences of the first steps are similar to one another.

The transition phase takes place after the status quo is understood and different types of preparations performed. This phase defines the real implementation phase of change initiatives.

The fourth phase of Kotter's eight-step model entails the activity to *recruit a 'volunteer army'*, which insist that members and employees have to believe that it is possible and useful to invest in the change effort, which cannot be realized without continuous, clear, and communication with the people in the organization. In other words, leaders of change have to apply all available and concrete means as well as opportunities to communicate the vision and characteristics of the change throughout the organization after a clear future vision for the organization is developed. This way, extensive support is gained in the organization, which can be done by, for instance, persistently "spreading the word" that includes the needs of the change and that

the change will make the organization better. (Kamara, 2018). Kotter (2011) In order to contribute something to the communication of an organization's new vision, it is argued that communication is the key to provide the examples of simplicity, analogy, metaphor, repetition, example, and leadership.

*Empower action by removing barriers*, the fifth phase of Kotter's eight-step model (1996), stress that an organization need to remove eventual interferences that are coupled with the institution of inducements in order to for a successful change to come about. Thus, change agents must (1) minimize eventual barriers and manage resistance to change; (2) change both the structure and systems that negatively influence the realization of the vision; and (3) empower activities in taking risks, innovation, and creativity (Kotter, 1996; Ha, 2014). For instance, the remainder of an organizations policies and structure may become a barrier for the successful employment of a change initiative. (Kamara, 2018). Kotter (1996, p. 63) means that communication is insufficient and that "renewal also requires the removal of obstacles." Thus, it is inadequate to merely have employees bought into the change since eventual obstacles needs to be removed as well as that these may avert people from implementing a change. (Kamara, 2018).

Kotter's model (1996) also stress about the importance to *generate short-term wins*, which is the sixth phase of the approach. Kotter (1996, p. 65) state "...real transformation takes time, and a renewal effort risks losing momentum if there are no short-term goals to meet and celebrate." Hence, this phase is critical as it both builds and sustains the "forward momentum" of a change initiative as people may give up or join the ones that are resistant towards the change without some positive outcome for all the time and effort invested in the initiative. These types of short-term wins should be realized every 1-2 year. (Kamara, 2018).

Jabri (2012), however, means that a pilot study should be performed before a full implementation is done. On the other end, Dawson and Andrioppulos (2014) argue that it is crucial to receive regular reviews and feedback during the phase of transition. Similarly, Kotter (2011), Luecke (2003), and Hamel (2000) also have different perceptions in the transition phase. For instance, Luecke (2003) highlight the importance of results at the starting point of change. Kotter (2011), however, stress about the importance to communicate and empower, and short-term wins during the transition phase of a change process. In conclusion, there are only a few agreements in the transition phase.

The process of change management does not necessarily have to be done after the transition phase has been accomplished and the post-phase begins. As presented earlier in this study, several authors argue that change is a continuous condition and a constant and ongoing process (see e.g. Ahrenfelt, 2001; Baker & Taylor, 2007; Dumas & Beinecke, 2017). From this perspective, the management of change also is an ongoing process.

During short-term successes, leaders of change may be inclined to believe that the change they have realized cannot be reversed by the people that are resistant to it. The seventh phase of Kotter's (2011) eight-step model is, hence, to *sustain acceleration*. This phase place emphasis on leaders of change not acknowledging that the whole "war has been won" during celebrations of short-term wins as it may be catastrophic. Kotter (1996) means that leaders of change instead should use this momentum of generosity and support gained through the temporary win to unravel more significant encounters to a change that lasts. Thus, leaders of change should use the trust won by the previous accomplishments of change to go "...after systems and structure that are not consistent with the transformation vision and have not been confronted before" (Kotter, 1996, p. 66).

Thus, the management of an organization need to (1) stimulate change efforts by altering systems, structures, and human resource policies that hinder the realization of the vision; and (2) stimulate the change process with new interventions and initiatives (Kotter, 1995; Ha, 2014). From this perspective, Kotter (2011) highlight the importance of change expansion, leadership, and anchoring. Luecke (2003), however, highlight that focus should lie to modify and adjust strategies according to eventual imminent problems connected to the change process. Hamel (2001), on the other hand, has another perception in comparison to Luecke (2003) in terms of what should be the prime focus during the last phase, namely, to isolate, penetrate, and integrate the change processes, which is a quite similar perception in comparison to Kotter (2011).

The last phase of the Kotter's eight-step model (1996) is to *institutionalize change*, which is a phase that stress on the importance to adjust the culture of an organization to a change initiative. Kotter (1996, p. 67) state "...until new behaviors are rooted in social norms and shared values, they are subject to degradation as soon as the pressure for change is removed." A change of the organization's culture is of essentiality during such initiatives. Kotter (1996, p. 67) means that change is only realized when it "... becomes the way we do things around here", which means that it needs to be a new type of ordinary for the organization.

Jabari (2012), Bevan (2011), Dawson and Andriopoulos (2014), and Luecke (2003) all have more different than similar perceptions of what should be done during the last phase. For instance, Jabari (2012, 20) continues on the idea to have a pilot study as learning opportunities are of vital importance as eventual failures can be avoided by trial and error. Kotter (2011) and Hamel (2000) both have similar and different perceptions regarding activities to be performed during the post-phase. For example, both authors highlight the importance to consolidate change in a sustainable manner. Luecke (2003), however, place emphasize to review and address the change and, thus, have another perspective in comparison to Kotter (2011) and Hamel (2000).

In conclusion, different authors within the change management field have a different understanding in terms of what should be done in the post-phase. However, terms that characterize the post-phase is to assess, modify, the effect of learning, and to be aware that change and change management is an ongoing process.

### **3.4 Conceptualizing systemic change management**

Overall, insights from systems thinking, systemic change and change management includes several similarities but also differences as they include different agendas and ways to approaching the phenomenon to manage a systemic change on an operational level in the context of a public organization. All presented perspectives also have their own argumentations in ways to manage an organizational change for a change process to successfully proceed. The following paragraphs describe some of the similarities and differences in the presented theories, followed by an overall conceptualization of the key findings in the literature.

A systemic change essentially means a transformation of a whole system resulting in a cultural change: something that affect all functions of a whole system, similar to the principle in systems thinking as it stresses on the whole', its parts, and the relationship between them (Bodhanya, 2016). Systemic change highlights the importance of leadership, to involve people in the change process, and to change the structure, symbols, and culture in order for a successful change to be realized (Reinholz & Apkarian, 2018). Adelman & Taylor (2007, p. 57) capture the essence in systemic change when they state that it basically "...involves modifications that amount to a cultural shift in institutionalized values (i.e., reculturalization)." Similar to the essence in systemic change, advocates within change management places emphasis on leadership, to change the structure, symbols, and culture as well as to prepare and gain the support of the people for a change process. Change management, however, place more emphasis on the aspect

of higher-leveled management in addition to "the need of what" and how managers may lead a change successfully.

The literature in systemic change argue that such a change usually is implemented when efforts to change one aspect of a system fails to fix a problem (Reiser & Dempsey, 2017). Advocates in systems thinking, however, argue that the usage of the frameworks presented in change management and systems change to achieve a new steadiness by altering the system, is confounded when dealing with scale systems that are large (Bodhanya, 2016). Scholars within systems thinking argue that reality is complex and that it is of vital importance to acclimate and work with a different understanding as well as to understand how these influence a system, which can be performed by observing and learning from outcomes that may result from the relationship between the system and its environment. (Bodhanya, 2016). Scholars in systemic change also touch the aspect of learning when stating that managers should enable their employees to become a community of learners (Adelman & Taylor, 2007).

The literature within systemic change mean that such a change ultimately means a change in culture, which necessitate a change in symbols and, thus, structure (Reinholz & Apkarian, 2018). Similarly, scholars within change management also mean that eventual obstacles to a change should be minimized and removed as (Kotter, 1996; Ha, 2014) "renewal also requires the removal of obstacles" (Kamara, 2019, p. 78). Insights in systems thinking touches on this perspective and draw it even further when stating that structure drive behavior as a structure has an unpremeditated and non-linear relationship between variables that have a chain of cause and effect embedded in feedback loops that fosters to dynamic complexity (Senge, 2006).

The literature within systemic change argue that the numerous ways to interact and identities of the people within an organization is essential to consider during the contemplation of changes in an organization and, thus, draw attention to the multifaceted and occasionally dissimilar experiences and understanding within an organization. (Reinholz & Apkarian, 2018). Similarly, the insights from systems thinking, from a constructivist approach, highlights the importance to see a system as a whole and something that includes an organizations sub-systems, human activity, and social-technical system, as well as argue that all parts are interconnected. In a sense, it highlights that all system components must be present and taken into consideration for a successful change outcome to come about, that proper relationships in a systems component is of vitality, and that leadership optimizes the system (Potocki & Brocato, 1995).

The following paragraphs present the key findings in the presented theories. The concepts may be interpreted as quite similar in terms as they are closely connected to one another. Thus, all relationships might as well, in some way or another, be connected to each another but for the sake of simplicity and a better understanding of the conceptual framework, the key findings is divided as follows (1) the meaning of a systemic change; (2) how to lead a systemic change; and (3) how the context and content may be influence an organizational change.

**The meaning of a systemic change.** The outcome of a systemic change is ultimately a cultural change. Advocates in change management mean that a change initiative mainly involves a change of the organization's culture, which is only realized when the outcome of the change is a new kind of standard (Kotter, 1996). Similarly, the presented model in systemic change includes different pillars that hold the mainframe culture. From a systemic change perspective, the outcome of a systemic change is a cultural change as its responses to external stimuli, which is an argument that goes well in line with systems thinking that means that all parts are interconnected to one another (Reinholz and Apkarian, 2018; Bodhanya, 2016).

An organizations culture may be interpreted to include two types of cultures: informal and formal. A formal culture includes the aspects of vision and mission, policies, specific procedures, and rules or prohibitions whereas an informal culture includes shared values and beliefs. Organizations also include different sub-cultures and perspectives (Dandeker & Gow, 1999; Reinholz & Apkarian, 2018). Culture is, however, something difficult to define, measure, and understand as well as, in my opinion, something that is difficult to comprehend and figure out as an outside spectator of such a complex and rather abstract phenomenon that almost invisibly flows through and is connected to everything in an organization (see e.g. Reinholz & Apkarian, 2018). Similarly, Senge (in Gaffney, 1985) argue that everything is interconnected and that the likelihood of figuring out life is small as well as that progress is made when people realize that fact. In addition to the idea that culture is a complex phenomenon on its own, Pollitt & Bouckaert (2004) and other scholars argue that systemic change is complex and dynamic by nature as it is one of the most complex forms of institutional changes since it intends to influence a whole structure or character of a government (see e.g. Wagener, 1993; Ghavifekr & Hussin, 2011).

**How to lead a systemic change.** Based on the literature presented in this chapter, the key-perspectives connected to how to lead a systemic change include the following aspects (1) to build a community of engagement, coherence, and mutual understanding through



communication and dialogue, participation and involvement; and (2) to alter processes, structures, and symbols.

A change process may be something that is initially met with either resistance or acceptance. Regardless initial response to the change, a successful outcome of a change is something that may be closely connected to a managers communication and dialogues about the changes, and involvement of the personnel by making them participating in the change process, which results in the necessity to have a community of engagement, consistency and mutual understanding during such a process. Elsewise, a lack of motivation to realize the change may arise, and gossip and rumors start to bloom and spread in the organization, leading to the process of implementing the systemic organizational change connected to negativity and met with resistance.

All presented theories highlight the importance to *build a community of coherence and mutual understanding*, which may be something discussed in different ways. From a systemic change and change management perspective, this is something that can be realized by involving the people in the making of a shared vision in a department to build coherence in the group. (Reinholz & Apkarian, 2018). Theory indicates that those researchers that argue the important role of the manager, that is the need to change people's' way of thinking, does fulfill the essence of a manager's main task during a systemic change.

Advocates within systems thinking mean that mutual understanding can be achieved through togetherness mediated through communication and dialogue (Bodhanya, 2016). The change management literature, however, does not place as much emphasis on togetherness as the other theories. Still, it addresses the issue and means that it can be accomplished by communication and by explaining the reasons for the change, to build a coalition that shares the underlying strategic vision by communication, to spread the vision, and form a strategic vision and incentive by providing the people an appealing picture of the future. Similarly, the change management model as presented by Pettigrew (1985), Pettigrew et al. (2001), and Kuipers et al. (2013) also highlights the importance of managers communicating the reason for the inevitability of change to avoid eventual gossip and rumors and to ensure the support needed for the change process to successfully proceed. Kotter (1996) also highlight the importance of communication and mean that it is needed to enrich a fast and extensive support for change (Kamara, 2018). Likewise, systemic change place emphasis on this aspect.

The literature in systemic change and change management mean that there is a need to *build a community of engagement* by involving others in ways that are meaningful by, for instance, having the employees participating in the change process. This way, the employees are more likely to be committed to the change (Van der Voet et al., 2016). From a systemic change perspective, a community of engagement can be achieved by altering the conversation, so people see possibilities instead of obstacles as well as to focus on positive and broad outcomes and to build real success or early wins. Similarly, the change management literature mean that short-term wins must be generated during one to two years to not lose the beliefs and engagement of the people in a change initiative. In addition, advocates in change management argue that creating a sense of urgency is the first thing that should be performed during an organizational change since it is essential to have a commitment and mobilize energy early on. Representatives of systemic change, however, draw this to another level and means that power should be distributed and that representatives from different levels should participate in the decision-making process.

A successful outcome of an organizational change is also discussed from the overall perspective to *attend the people*. Besides exchanging information during dialogue, the literature in systems thinking also argue that it is of necessity that managers are receptive and able to take feedback and to be okay in changes in role, open to learning, receptive and adaptive to ideas, during change processes. Advocates in systemic change, however, stress on the individual's agency and mean that managers not only should be great at communication during a change but also provide high support and have high expectations on their employees, as a non-attendance to the people and their agency may result in them not having any motivation for the organizational change. In addition, managers should consider employee skills and their readiness for change, organizational culture, and employee motivation during a systemic change (Reinholz & Apkarian, 2018; Adelman & Taylor, 2007).

In order for a systemic change to be successfully realized, a change in culture thus has to be performed, which means that managers in organizations undergoing such a change need to do activities that alter the “current” culture to the “wanted” culture. Although in different ways, the literature in both change management and systemic change, address the aspects within behavioral and organizational and physical features. Both perspectives speak to the issue to *alter processes, structures, and systems*, as well as present different ways of going about a change of these elements. For instance, the change management literature argue that eventual interferences coupled with the institution of incentives should be removed. In essence, the

managers are stated to have a duty to reduce eventual hindrances and resistance to change and change both the structure and systems that negatively influences the achievement of a vision (Kotter, 1996).

Similarly, from the perspective of systemic change, a change of the structure must be performed in order for a sustainable change to come about (Reinholz & Apkarian, 2018; Adelman & Taylor, 2007). Ultimately, however, advocates of systemic change argue that a change of structure ultimately results in a change of symbols (the language, cultural artifacts, knowledge, values, myths, and vision).

***How the context and content may influence an organizational change.*** A basic premise provided from insights of systematical thinking is that the “whole” is something fundamental to understand in order to understand anything. From an organizational point of view, this include aspects of people, materials, and processes that together complete a function that is meaningful as well as contributes to a specific aim such as a public service (Potocki & Brocato, 1995; Taylor, 2016). Thus, instead of approaching something from a reductionist approach, i.e. reducing the whole by analyzing its parts, by using a so-called systems model, a researcher can assess whole systems, teams as well as isolated issues in a structured and systematic manner. Aspects of context, content, process, (former) outcomes and leadership affect the process of an organizational change. In the case of the Armed Forces, some things that may play a critical role in the process of an organizational change is its former background in systemic changes leading to structural inconsistencies, its bureaucracy, hierarchy, and complex line management as well as that it is a geographically spread organization (context). Thus, these aspects should be taken into consideration during an analysis of change as they are factors that are of vital importance to understand characteristics related to the process of an organizational change (Taylor, 2016; Pettigrew, 1985; Pettigrew et al., 2001; Kuipers et al., 2013).

In conclusion, one common denominator between the presented theories is that managers have a vital role in the success of a whole change process as they need to (1) communicate and have dialogues about the changes with their employers; and (2) involve the personnel by making them participate in the change process. Another common denominator is that a change initiative mainly involves a change of the organization's culture, which is only realized when the outcome of the change is the new kind of normal since the outcome of a systemic change is a cultural change as it responses to external stimuli (Kotter, 1996). A change in culture almost necessities a change of symbols that may, most easily, entail a change in structure and process. The

literature comprises the underlying meaning that managers ultimately should focus to gain the support of the people, who, in a sense is the organization. A change initiative is stated as something that cannot be fulfilled if the people do not believe and work for the change to be implemented and completed. It is also essential to include the aspects such as context and leadership while analyzing change as it is factors that influence a change process (Kuipers et al., 2013; Pettigrew, 1985; Pettigrew et al., 2001).

## **4 GROUNDED THEORIZING AS A METHOD FOR GENERATING THEORY THROUGH QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS**

The following chapter presents this thesis research strategy, a grounded theorizing case-study approach, data generation through semi-structure theme interviews, and data analysis process according to the method of grounded theorizing, followed by an overall reflection on the research strategy.

### **4.1 Research strategy**

*A grounded theorizing case-study approach* was applied as a method of qualitative research as it went well in line with the theme of this thesis: to study action and interaction, and meaning (see e.g. Nolas, 2011). This approach allowed me to study and capture a selected number of interviewee's perspectives on factors that enable them to lead a systemic change in the context of a public organization. More specifically, the research strategy of grounded theorizing was used for conducting qualitative research and performed during the whole process of this thesis as well as for organizing the analytical categories, which was performed through a single-case study design as it allowed me to frame my research questions.

There are two main research methods that researchers can use for their studies: qualitative and quantitative. In general, the latter approach includes the processes of deduction, testing of theory, objectivism, and positivism, while the qualitative research method involves the processes of induction, generation of theory, subjectivism, and non-positivism (McNabb, 2008). The qualitative research approach was, however, used in this thesis as it focuses on people and their experience and interpretation of the world, such as issues of how and why, as well as is characterized by the pursuit of understanding a specific phenomenon. In this case, the phenomenon includes the management of a systemic change, on an operational level, in the context of a public organization (see e.g. Holme et al., 1997). Pratt (2009, p. 856) describes qualitative research as "...understanding the world from the perspective of those studied (i.e., informants)...". The qualitative perspective can be explained through the key concepts meaning, context, and process. Meaning stands for how the individual interprets and understands the reality based on him- or herself, and the experience and knowledge he or she has. Context stands for studying human beings in their everyday lives and not in experimental situations. Researchers are considered as part of the method and thus, in one way or another, expected to affect the outcome of the study conducted. The traditional relationship between the

researcher as a subject and the studied phenomenon as an independent study-object is replaced by a relationship between the researcher and, as in this thesis, the interviewed. (Holme et al., 1997).

The difference between qualitative and quantitative research differs in several ways, such as in epistemology (the role taken by the researcher), subjective-objective dichotomy, and amount of flexibility. The qualitative research stance in epistemology, its subjective dichotomy and expansive flexibility combined with my desire to capture a selected number of participants point of views, perceptions of the reality of today, motives, and mindsets within the field being studied, lead me to employ the qualitative approach and, in particular, the methodology of grounded theorizing. Briefly explained, the epistemological stance in this study was understood as influencing the study as I have interpreted the meaning of the perspectives provided by the interviewees, something that was understood as influenced by my preconceived ideas about the phenomenon under study (see e.g. McNabb, 2008). Additionally, my subjective interpretation was also considered as an influencing factor as I considered myself to be a participant of the phenomenon under study since I, for instance, have been employed in the case organization during the writing of this thesis. (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2013; Böhm, 2004). This will, however, be further elaborated at the end of this chapter.

The following sections provide further information about the approach of grounded theory, and more specifically on grounded theorizing, and the reasons that I chose this particular methodology for this thesis.

#### **4.1.1 Grounded theorizing**

Grounded theory, or theorizing, was both the research strategy for this thesis as well as a tool for organizing the analytical categories. It has been more than 50 years since grounded theory was initially published and presented in the book called *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, written by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Grounded theory can be explained as a "...general methodology for the development of theory using any and all types of data..." and different types of philosophical assumptions such as positivism, constructivism, and critical realism (Walsh, et al., 2015, pp. 5-6). Grounded theory generates theory through qualitative analysis of either quantitative or qualitative data through the processes of collecting and analyzing gathered data, and then making a new selection based on the information it has provided. This process continues until saturation occurs, and a new theory is generated (Charmaz, 2014). The term grounded theory can, however, lead to misunderstandings as it both describes the research

process and end-result: a new theory based on empirically grounded data (Walsh, et al., 2015). Thus, instead of testing predetermined theories through experimentation, grounded theory's primary objective is to generate and develop concepts, models or theory out of empirical data; that is, the development of theory is controlled by the data (Glaser,1992; Hallberg, 1997; McNabb, 2008). Glaser (in Walsh et al., 2015) explains grounded theory as the discovery of developing patterns in data.

Numerous scholars have argued about grounded theory's appropriateness in research within management and organizational studies. For instance, grounded theory has the possibility of adapting well in order to seize complexities of a particular context where actions progress, which enables a researcher to understand better factors that might be of importance in a specific issue. (Locke, 2008). Thus, by using grounded theory, I had the opportunity to capture intentions and actions of a selected number of managers, the process wherein something is adopted and used, as well as include the context within which an event occurs (see e.g. Orlikowski, 1993).

The popularity of grounded theory has continued to grow the past quarter century, resulting in a diverse range of research outcomes being published in academic papers claiming to use grounded theory in their work. There has, however, been a discussion regarding "the nature of" grounded theory during the past quarter century and how much tolerance that should be put into "anything goes" in grounded theory (Walsh, et al., 2015, p. 242). Walsh et al. (2018, p. 242) and several other researchers, argue "...it is a matter of respecting GT [grounded theory] as it was intended and differentiating it from subsequent variations that have blurred the boundaries with other research approaches". Walsh et al. (2018) among others argue that the term grounded theory should be reserved to actual grounded theory research in which the fundamental aspects of emergence, theoretical sampling, and constant comparison are systematically employed, and its methodological principles followed. Instead, scholars argue that grounded theorizing offers a possibility to use an empirically grounded and inductive approach. By separating grounded theory from grounded theorizing, the muddling of methodologies is helped to be resolved, which is useful for those new to research and theorizing, such as myself. (see e.g. Walsh et al., 2018).

Based on the views presented above, the approach of grounded theorizing is used in this study due to foremost a lack of time and expertise in using grounded theory as a methodological

method within the given timeframe of finalizing the thesis as my expertise within the methodological approach was limited before writing this thesis.

Research often relies on having a theory well developed and set before the performance of data gathering. Grounded theory, however, takes that process and turns it the other way around by first gathering data and then developing a theory during testing (Corbin, 2017). Grounded theory advises against engagement with existing literature before data gathering since the idea is to not begin with an existing theory or preconceived ideas and later on force it on the data to verify them as the methodology aims at producing a theory grounded on the data. (Timonen et al., 2018; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In this manner, a researcher using grounded theory manages to elude eventual preconceptions or constraints in the thinking by imposing relationships and concepts that might not be relevant. (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Such advice, however, goes against current institutional requirements and conventions and several authors argue about the importance of engaging with extant literature in order to provide the researcher a point of departure, to delimit the topic, and justify the research questions (Timonen et al., 2018; Gustavsson, 1998). A researcher starting in a blank slate is no longer a realistic proposition and it is argued that reading the literature prior to the data collection can be considered as useful rather than a hindrance, provided that the researcher remains open to their data as the essential premise is to remain open toward existing theories which can be done more productively with such awareness (Timonen et al., 2018).

The approach of grounded theorizing was believed to be fitting in this thesis as it provided me an opportunity to analyze and understand how meaning is navigated and combined within social settings, as well as in what way people position themselves within their social worlds (Charmaz, 2014). The ontological belief that meaning is both shared and constructed, hence, was influential in determining the appropriateness of the research methodology selected for this study.

A research on the phenomenon of interest in this thesis was performed in the starting phase of this thesis to get a somewhat point of departure and delimit the topic, as well as, in particular, find some themes to focus on in the interviews. However, I was consciously trying to not read too much literature before the interviews and coding phases as I was aspiring to follow the principles of grounded theorizing. Meaning that the conceptual framework was developed simultaneously as the processes of emergence and discovery as well as data analysis (see e.g. Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978, 1992).



#### **4.1.2 An overview of the methodological process**

The research approach of grounded theory is characterized by the inductive (bottom-up) generation of theory from obtained and later on analyzed data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The research approach in grounded theory is, however, argued to include the elements of induction, abduction, and deduction (top-down). At the beginning of this study, inductive reasoning was employed, as is the case in most qualitative studies and grounded theory in particular as the understanding of phenomena and processes emerge from and are grounded in the data. (Timonen et al., 2018). Meaning that this thesis did not assume a given theory or hypothesis at the beginning of the process (McNabb, 2008).

The inductive approach resembles grounded theorizing where the starting point for building theoretical perspectives is to go from the specific to the general: it is also to some extent in resemblance to the constructivist approach, which often is the case in qualitative studies. In other words, this study was based on a bottom-up perspective where respondents were providing their views on the field of interest formed by their own experiences (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Parry et al.; Trost, 2010). The study also included elements of abduction. Abductive reasoning was performed when I was seeking to understand in what way the concepts, grounded in the data, related to existing knowledge, which was done during the aspiration of building theory. In other words, abductive reasoning was employed when my existing knowledge and “hunches” about a possible explanation for “what is going on” in the data. (see e.g. Timonen et al., 2018). Similarly, Timonen et al. (2018) mean that all researchers who are undertaking a grounded theory(izing) approach have an abductive phase as a researcher must seek to understand in what way concepts, grounded in the data, relate to existing knowledge, which is done during the process and aspiration of building an idea. Additionally, during the development and aspiration of building an idea, researchers may collect more data based on the outcome of the theory, which is more focused and, thus, the deductive phase the grounded theory(izing) process. This was, however, not performed in this thesis due to resource limitations (see e.g. Glaser, 1978).

The whole research process included the stages of (1) identifying a topic, coming up with ideas, concepts, and questions about my area of interest; (2) determination the purpose for the research; (3) selecting a group to study; (4) collecting research data through interviews; (5) preliminary coding of data; (6) theoretical coding for theoretical development; and (7) developing an idea (McNabb, 2008.)

More specifically, the overall methodological process conducted in this study included me approaching the organization being studied by gathering all possible facts relating to the phenomenon under study (managing a systemic change, on an operational level, in the context of a public organization), through interviews. Ideas and insights were generated after an in-depth analysis of the gathered data, where I was searching for differences and commonalities in the data by contrasting and comparing against possible theories. The literature review was performed parallel to the collection of data and the choice of literature governed by the appearance in the collected data (McNabb, 2008). The collected data was later on analyzed and interpreted by me that in turn, attempted to develop an idea based on the analysis and interpretation (McNabb, 2008; Glaser in Walsh et al., 2015).

Grounded theory or theorizing consists of the main phases of (1) emergence and discovery, which is the central logic of grounded theory; (2) constant comparisons including the sub-phases of coding, and memoing; and (3) theoretical sampling, saturation, and sorting. The analytical process in grounded theory is, however, all the more regulated in comparison to the collection of data (see e.g. Glaser, 1978; Charmaz, 2014).

## **4.2 Data generation**

The following section provides information in how my chosen method was applied to answer this thesis research questions. That is, how I collected, analyzed, and interpreted the data in order to find an answer to the research question (Sekaran, 2003).

### **4.2.1 Research setting**

This study employed a single-case study design as it allowed me to frame my research questions. As is the case of the qualitative perspective, case studies include research in a real context and are best suited to answer why and how questions. A case study is based on a particular research problem and the study object itself, such as an individual, a group, or a phenomenon, chosen in a certain context. (Yin, 2014; McNabb, 2008). In other words, a case study is not a representation of a picture of the world, but merely a representation of a specific case (Stake, 1994). In administrative science, a case study approach usually focuses on the agency, individual, organization, or group under a study, rather than different variables (Schwandt, 1997). In general, the objective of case study approaches may also serve to define a description of, for instance, a public organization wherein the case description serves as an example of groups within that field, such as other public defense organizations. Thus, the case study approach enabled me to reduce the available data to a reachable amount, which was

another reason I choose this approach. Nevertheless, clearly defining the case is not always simple, given that the boundaries between the context and the one a researcher wants to study are not given. (Yin, 2014). Yin (2014, pp. 16-17), however, means that a case study can be defined in twofold, by the scope of the case study and the features of the case study and defines it as follows:

*A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly dependent...*

There are several reasons why I chose the Armed Forces as my case organization for this thesis. For instance, I have experienced some of the changes discussed in this thesis as I have been employed at the Armed Forces 3.NSU management department from May 2015 to February 2019. In addition, I have coordinated several issues within the field of change, such as the implementation of the SAP deviation program in 2016 and the development of the 3.NSU internal change order for the organizational reform that officially took place in 2018. While working in the Armed Forces, it became evident how it was difficult to plan, implement, and lead a change in the organization, that we barely received any information about the changes and plans, and that it was more a rule than exception that the management department almost never had any time to analyze the meaning of an order before we had to redistribute a new “interpreted” order to the Service Centers. Additionally, the Armed Forces have a solid background within change, which I believed was something that made the phenomenon, managing a systemic change, on an operational level, in the context of a public organization such as the Armed Forces, even more interesting. The following paragraph presents the case under analysis.

In 2015, the government presented an official statement that the goals of Total Defense were heading for a systemic change as there was a need for a stronger defense. The government stated that the security situation in Europe had deteriorated and that the plan for the Armed Forces heightened preparedness (crisis) and war, thus, had been resumed. The parliament and government stated that a new organizational structure and line management structure was necessary as there was a need to increase the robustness and stamina in leadership skills in the Armed Forces. Additionally, they meant that there was a need to simplify and clarify the management conditions and the government and, hence, suggested that the management resources were to be geographically spread as well as to decentralize decisions since it increases the opportunities for the various organizations to replace and support each other when

necessary. The government meant that the current and single most crucial defense policy was to ensure a (1) collective ability of the Total Defense, and (2) increased operative effect during the targeting period of 2016-2020. Meaning that the organization currently is implementing a new organizational and management structure by going from a “phase of peace” (deployment defense) to a “phase of crisis and war” (defense). (Swedish Armed Forces, 2017, 2018b; The Government, 2015). Meaning that they are to transform the whole system. (see e.g. Reiser and Dempsey, 2007, 210; Swedish Armed Forces, 2017, 4-5). In practice, this means that the organization undergoes different organizational changes, such as reorganizations and added military training (The Government, 2018a, 2018b).

#### **4.2.2 Interviewees, sampling strategy, and transcription**

The empirical data was generated through semi-structured theme interviews. Interviews that include themes is a method that does not progress through detailed questions, instead, such an approach takes advantage of emerging themes that appear in a study (Åstedt-Kurki & Heikkinen, 1994). The interviews performed for this study included the three following themes: (1) the organization; (2) the manager(s); and (3) change, leading change, and systemic change. The questions were developed based on this thesis phenomenon under study: managing a systemic change on an operational level in the context of a public organization.

The questions in the interviews were in general “neutral” and “open-ended” and included numerous follow-up questions. In practice, this included me asking the informant a somewhat open question such as “What does an organizational change mean to you?” and “What is the first thing that comes to your mind regarding organizational change and the Armed Forces?”, and then trying to follow their statement(s) by continuously following up questions such as “can you elaborate what you mean by this?”. By conducting the interviews in this manner, I aimed to enhance my opportunity to follow their thoughts within the phenomena under study and let them lead me into specific directions rather than me leading them to conclusions that I might have had within the field before conducting the interviews. In other words, I tried to follow the interviewees' concerns within change and management and, thus, discover the most significant aspects relating to the themes in the interviews. Similarly, a semi-structured interview aims to allow the one being interviewed to discuss a topic in a free manner (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008; Alasuutari, 1995). A general list of the interview questions can be found in Appendix 1.

Before conducting the semi-structured theme interviews, a preliminary plan of themes and open-ended questions was prepared. Nevertheless, as the method of semi-structured interviews

is based on the interviewer and interviewee performing a dialogue, I had the freedom of adapting the wording and order of questions during the interviews. Similar to the approach of grounded theory, other scholars argue that skillful researchers will learn what the interviewee believes is the issue at hand within the phenomenon under study during an interview and, thus, indulge those issues accordingly (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994).

The interviewees were recruited through the method of purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that a researcher can use to recruit a small number of participants who can provide unfathomable and detailed information about the phenomenon that the researcher is studying. (Cassell et al., 2018). In the case of this thesis, my criteria were to interview active managers on an operational level in the Armed Forces (see Table 1). In addition, the interviewees were selected based on a selection of comfort (see e.g. Trost, 2008).

**Table 1.** Overview of the interviewee’s backgrounds. The ages refer to the age the interviewee had at the time of the interview. Experience refers to the years that they have worked at the Swedish Armed Forces.

Interviewee	Age	Employment	Experience in years	Educational background
Phw	58	Civil	29	High-School
Pwz	43	Military	22	Officer’s training
Oug	59	Civil	42	Graduate in Economics

Inquiries for participating in this qualitative research study were asked face-to-face during the period May-August 2018 as I was working at the case organization during the inquiry and, hence, had an excellent opportunity to ask, for this study, relevant managers if they were interested in participating. While asking about their interest in participating in the study, I also presented my rather broad phenomenon of interest at the time, change and management in the public sector, as well as the purpose of the thesis, while also explaining that participating in the study was voluntary and that they would be anonymous (Gillham, 2000). In addition, before conducting the interviews, the informants and I concluded that there would not be a need to discuss sensitive information, such as security number and sensitive “military information”, during the interviews due to the topic and purpose of this thesis.

Three face-to-face interviews were conducted in total since I believed that the data was sufficient for the purposes of this thesis. At the time of the interviews being conducted, all managers worked on an operational level and with change issues at the case organization. The data was generated within a time frame of two weeks in October 2018. The duration of the interviews varied but lasted approximately 1.5 hours each. The interviews were performed in Sweden.

Before conducting the interviews, I was contemplating if I would perform the interviews in either Swedish, the interviewees, and my native language, or English, the language used in this thesis. The interviews were performed in Swedish as I concluded that I would be uncomfortable to interview them in English when we all speak the same language. I also believed that the interviewees possibly would feel uncomfortable to speak English during the interview, which was something that also was stated by one of them as well before the conduction of the interview. These views are shared by Tsang (1998) who points out that being interviewed in a foreign language is something that may harm the interviewees feeling of comfortable, opening up to the researcher, and the ability of the interviewee to fully express himself or herself.

As advised by Al-Yateem (2012) note taking and recording with one phone device (Easy Voice Recorder and Speechnotes) and one computer application (Photobooth), was performed during the interviews. Two devices were used to ensure that (1) the interviews were recorded successfully; and (2) the transcription would be correct. All interviews were recorded after the interviewees had permitted me to use the devices. 57 pages of transcription resulted after I transcribed the interviews followed by a translation from Swedish to English performed before the data analysis process. The reason I translated the interviews from Swedish to English was because I believed that it would facilitate the data analysis process, foremost the phase of theoretical coding, since I believed that the majority of literature would be in English and not Swedish. Moreover, the Armed Forces HQ has permitted to publish this study, but the study will still be sent to the organization for review before its publication in case some of its content has to be classified.

In the following sub-section, a categorization of identified concepts that emerged during the coding phases, initial, focused and axial, of grounded theory in the data analysis process is presented, which is based on the responses from the interviewees. The data analysis is based on my interpretative understanding of the emerged core categories, which reflects both the interviewees and my way of thinking. (see e.g. Charmaz, 2014.)

### 4.3 Data analysis

Scholars within grounded theory mean that generated data should be analyzed as soon as it is gathered. In this thesis, however, the generated data was not analyzed as soon as it was collected due to the resource limitations of this study. Thus, the research process within this study has, rather, been linear than cyclical (Hugh-Jones & Gibson, 2012). Nevertheless, as this thesis undertakes the approach of grounded theorizing, the emphasis is not placed in performing a cyclical research process but that data is empirically grounded and the approach inductive (see e.g. Walsh et al., 2018).

The data analysis key processes within the methodology of grounded theory are coding and memoing (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978, 1992). Overall, coding is the process of conceptualizing data into concepts, which comprises the uniformity, meanings, and patterns in the data. As many authors have interpreted the coding process, different phases of coding have been identified and named differently. Charmaz (2014) means that the coding stages include initial, focused, axial, and theoretical coding, which was the coding stages used in this thesis, see table 2 for a brief explanation of these stages.

**Table 2.** Overview of the data analysis process in this thesis. Coding phases according Charmaz (2014) (table adapted from Bartlett and Payne (1997)).

Phase	Description	
Transcription	Transcription of the dialogue between the interviewees and interviewer.	
Initial coding	Finding concepts and thoughts that were reoccurring constantly by going through phrase-by-phrase.	
Focused coding	Analyzing the initial codes to categorize them incisively and completely, which enabled me to develop focused categories.	Memo writing Writing down all thoughts and ideas that came to mind during the research process.
Axial coding	Categories related to subcategories based on three of the scientific terms presented by Strauss and Corbin (1998, 125): conditions, actions, and consequences/outcomes.	
Theoretical coding	Relationships between the categories were conceptualized with the categories found and developed during the former coding phases.  Consulting relevant literature and linking it with existing theories.	

### 4.3.1 Coding phases

During the phase of *initial coding*, I was trying to remain open to explore theoretical opportunities I could find in the data. By analyzing data with data, I learned what the participants viewed as challenging and started to move closer to the analytical phase. In practice, this meant that I was analyzing the data word-by-word, line-by-line, and incident-by-incident, which allowed me to summarize the gathered data with concepts of data into codes (Charmaz, 2014). Initially, a total of 30 preliminary core conceptual concepts were identified, see Appendix 2.

During *focused coding*, a phase that is more directed, selective, and conceptual, I aimed to synthesize and find explanations to larger parts of data. Charmaz (2006, p. 57) explains this phase as "...using the most significant and/or frequent earlier codes to shift through large amount of data". In this phase, I was making conclusions of which initial codes made the most logical sense to categorize the data completely, which enabled me to develop a focused code or categories (Charmaz, 2014). A total of five categories were identified (1) type of change; (2) institutional dynamics; (3) communication, participation, and resources; (4) continually striving to improve and enhance the teams atmosphere; and (5) focusing on the emotions of those adversely impacted by the change (see table 3 and Appendix 3 for a detailed coding table).

**Table 3.** Identified initial core concepts, focused categories, and subcategories that emerged during the initial-, focused-, and axial coding phase.

Initial core concepts (including stemmed words)	Focused categories	Subcategories
Bureaucracy, hierarchy, large, old, geographically spread, long decision paths, several layers of management, military culture (order, command, and subordination) structural inconsistencies, constant organizational changes (reorganization, dismantle, internal structural change, refine), governed by elected representatives (top-down decision making)	Institutional dynamics (history, context, and environment)	<p><b>Condition:</b> Bureaucracy, hierarchy, large, old, geographically spread, military culture (order, command, and subordination), constant organizational changes (reorganization, dismantle, internal structural change, refine), governed by elected representatives (top-down decision making)</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Structural inconsistencies, Long decision paths, several layers of management</p>
Cultural change (organizational change, reorganization, huge change or difference, structural	Type of change	<p><b>Condition:</b> Organizational change, reorganization, structural change, internal structural change, refine</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Cultural change</p>



change, internal structural change)		
Communication (information), participation (involvement), uncertainty (unclear, I do not know, maybe, I believe, I have no idea), speculation, time and resources, follow-up (feedback), (Type of) attitude, holistic view, long-term tasks, (Feeling of) togetherness (team, teambuilding, belonging, together, group, everyone)	Communication, participation, and resources	<p><b>Condition:</b> Time and resources</p> <p><b>Action:</b> Communication (information), participation (involvement),</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Uncertainty (unclear, I do not know, maybe, I believe, I have no idea), speculation, (Amount of) follow-up (feedback), holistic view, long-term tasks, (Feeling of) togetherness (team, teambuilding, belonging, together, group, everyone), (Type of) attitude</p>
People (individual), togetherness, Listening, discussing, understanding, guiding, calming down, (Type of) attitude, loyalty	Constantly striving to improve and enhance the teams atmosphere	<p><b>Condition:</b> Time and resources</p> <p><b>Action:</b> Listening, discussing, understanding, guiding, calming down</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> (Feeling of) togetherness (team, teambuilding, belonging, together, group, everyone), (Type of) attitude, loyalty</p>
(Type of) attitude, legacy (history), participation, learning, informal and formal meetings, holistic view, internal structural change (relocating employees, restructuring the whole department, replacing managers, changing the language)	Focusing on the emotions of those impacted by the change	<p><b>Condition:</b> (Type of) attitude (resistant), (Amount of) understanding, legacy (history), (amount of) time and resources</p> <p><b>Action:</b> informal and formal meetings, holistic view, participation, learning, internal structural change (relocating employees, restructuring the whole department, replacing managers, changing the language)</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> (Type of) attitude, loyalty</p>

During *axial coding*, categories were related to subcategories (see table 3). The purpose of this phase was to bridge data back together in order to have a coherent whole. (Charmaz, 2014). This phase enabled me to get a fuller picture of my data by linking categories to subcategories while asking myself in what way the data was connected (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). During this phase, I was taking help from three scientific terms presented by Strauss and Corbin (1998), which researchers can use while organizing this type of scheme. These terms include conditions, actions, and outcomes. The condition answers questions of why, where, how come, and when, and focuses on the situations or circumstances that form the structure of a studied

phenomenon. The actions answer questions of whom and how, such as the participants' routines towards events, issues, or problems. The outcomes answer the question of what happens due to the actions. (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). During the axial coding phase analysis process, I found that the subcategories were interconnected to one another in several manners. Thus, I developed an initial figure in an attempt to understand these interrelations better (see appendix 5).

During the progression of the analysis, the properties of categories started to become more integrated, and I started making increasing theoretical sense of each comparison. I also discovered underlying uniformities in the original categories and its properties. Thus, I started delimiting the categories and instead focused on a reduced list of categories since some of the coded incidents did not add anything new to the theory. In other words, the categories were theoretically saturated, which is when I stopped coding. (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978, 1992.)

The last coding phase, as explained by Charmaz (2014), is *theoretical coding*, which includes consulting with relevant literature and linking it with existing theories. After theoretical sampling, saturation, and sorting, my ideas were incorporated into a developing idea, which is something that will be presented in chapter 5 and 6. In addition, Glaser and Strauss (1967, pp. 31-32), describes the way to present an idea that is grounded in the data as “either... ..a well-codified set of propositions or in a running theoretical discussion using conceptual categories and their properties”. Glaser and Strauss (1967, pp. 31-32) emphasize that “theory is a process” and something that continuously develops and that it, thus, is not a product that is perfect.

#### **4.3.2 Memo writing**

In this thesis, my memos were used as one tool or “analytical source” during the aspiration to develop an idea. Memo writing was performed during the whole working process, which helped me move from the data towards concepts and categories (Sandberg, 2007). Memo writing is something that is a crucial part of grounded theorizing and a core stage in the process of generating theory (Charmaz, 2014). A key procedural difference between grounded theory and other types of qualitative research is memoing. In the majority of descriptive research, the researcher ends up with a list of codes and categories, which usually has to be grouped in some manner. In grounded theory, the researcher ends up with several codes and a huge number of memos. (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978, 1992).

Parts of my memos have been integrated into the research where it best fitted together, following the practices of grounded theorizing. There are no rules in writing memos. However,

some housekeeping rules include dating the memos as well as the usage of headings. Memoing has been argued as something that should be performed as soon as a researcher has an idea, which was what I did in this thesis. See appendix 4 for an example of a memo developed during the analysis process. (Charmaz, 2014.)

#### **4.4 Reflection of the research strategy**

The way a researcher designs and employs a study is guided by the underlying philosophical position brought to the research conducted. The foundations for these positions are embedded in ontology and epistemology, which are the philosophical constructs concerned with how researchers develop knowledge. Ontology can be said to deal with what individuals can learn and asks, “what is there?” (McNabb, 2006; Saunders et al., 2016). A researcher ontological foundation argues that one’s experiences lead individuals to be concerned with specific research questions and that, for instance, the reason for researchers approaching the same phenomenon from different perspectives is due to their ontological foundation. (McNabb, 2006).

By performing grounded theorizing, researchers have to examine and declare their epistemological premises, as the theory is dependent on the researchers' view and hence, cannot stand outside it (Cassell et al., 2018). Epistemology is concerned with the questions of what one knows and how one knows it (Saunders et al., 2016). In other words, it includes the questions of the way individuals learn and the validity of knowledge (McNabb, 2008). However, through grounded theorizing, knowledge is derived through the process of constant comparison in search for eventual differences and similarities in the gathered data. The original formulations of grounded theory assume the researcher to be a neutral knower. However, in recent years, it is encouraged that the researcher takes a reflexive stance to grounded theory as it makes the research process more transparent and accountable. (Nolas, 2011). A researcher's epistemological position and approach can be anything between positivism and post-positivism. In this study, a constructionist stance was taken as I, for instance, started my research with a set of assumptions about the research phenomenon and then built my understanding through observations and redefined my theory as I added additional observations, also something that is called an inductive approach (McNabb, 2006).

My ontological foundation is the product of my background and includes aspects of, for instance, experience, culture, values, and role. These aspects were identified as influenced by my own concerns and reflections about the phenomenon under study as I have been employed at the case organization from May 2015 to February 2019 as well as both have worked with the

3.NSU organizational reform and the interviewees, which is something that was taken into account during the writing of this thesis. I have experienced some of the changes that the interviewees addressed, such as the military training and changed order culture performed to change the organization's culture. I have also worked with all the interviewees and, thus, have a past relationship with all of them, which is something that can be considered as both an advantage and disadvantage. In my opinion, my prior relationships with the interviewees was advantageous as got an impression that the interviewees, in comparison to someone who would not have known them, thus, were more open to me about their thoughts regarding their situation, which is also how our discussions have been prior to the conduction of the interviewees. (see e.g. McNabb, 2006.)

My work experience in the Armed Forces Logistics 3.NSU management department and past relationship with the interviewees may also come with some disadvantages. For instance, before the writing of this thesis, I may already have had some ideas and thoughts about the phenomenon under study, which may have influenced the overall themes and follow-up questions asked during the interviews conducted October 2018 as well as the analytical process during the writing of this thesis. For instance, initially, I believed that the structural, organizational reform that the organization was undergoing in 2018 was the phenomenon under study in this thesis, but it was not. During one of the interviews, the interviewee discarded and minimized the issue of the structural, organizational reform and referred to the several changes the Armed Forces and Service Center had undergone due to factors such as the Total Defense going from a phase of peace to crisis and war. At the time of the interview, I did not understand that the phenomenon that we were discussing was the systemic change that the Armed Forces is undergoing during 2016-2020. It was, however, not until the analysis process that I found that the phenomenon was about managing a systemic change rather than a simple structural, organizational reform.

In classical grounded theory, a theory is seen as emerging from the data, which is drawn out by researchers whose role is seen as a detached but reflexive scientific observer. In studies that undertake a constructivist epistemological stance, however, the construction of knowledge is seen as developed by all active participants, the interviewees and myself, in the research, which is the case in this study. (see e.g. Charmaz, 2014). McNabb (2007, p. 41) clarifies the philosophical stance of a constructionist, which has gone well in line with my view when stating: "...the idea that reality is what society says it is; it comes into being only as product of the interaction of people in society. Reality must be constructed by the observers".

During the data analysis process of initial coding, data is supposed to be seen as actions, and I was genuinely trying to conduct this phase without too many preconceived concepts in my mind by not reading too much literature about the phenomenon before the analytical phase (Glaser, 1978, 1992). This was, however, something I found to be difficult since I found myself thinking about what I had read beforehand while analyzing the data. Charmaz (2014, p. 48) also argues that “I agree with Glaser’s approach of keeping initial coding open-ended yet acknowledge that researchers hold prior ideas and skills”. Nevertheless, a rule of thumb in this phase is not to force the data into the codes but rather make the codes fit with the data, which is something that I also was trying to do. (Charmaz, 2014).

Lastly, it needs to be acknowledged that I obtained my bachelor’s degree in the field of environmental science, which differs from administrative science in, for instance, the possibility of building theory within social sciences, on the one hand, and the environmental sciences, on the other hand. The latter is more characterized by ‘lawfulness’ in comparison to social sciences. Social relationships are characterized by not only changing circumstances but also by very complex ones (Holme et al., 1997). This aspect is something that I took into consideration during the writing of the thesis, and the usage of grounded theorizing as my own expertise within the methodological approach was limited prior to the study. Even though I have been excited to both learn and apply grounded theorizing, I acknowledge eventual shortcomings during the research process.

## **5 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS: MANAGING A SYSTEMIC CHANGE IN THE SWEDISH ARMED FORCES AND INFLUENCING FACTORS**

This chapter presents the focused categories and their respective concepts and relations to one another that emerged during the data analysis process discussed in the previous chapter on methods. The structure of this chapter begins with an explanation of how the outcomes of a grounded theory(izing) process should be presented and justifies the approach taken in this thesis (5.1). Followed by the primary outcome of this paper: an idea, grounded in the data, based on my interpretation of the emerged focused categories, concepts, and its relations during the data analysis of the operational manager's perception in working with systemic change in the context of a public organization (5.2-5.3). Chapter 6 places this thesis idea, grounded in the data, into the context of previous literature within the phenomenon of managing a systemic change on an operational level within public organizations. By dividing chapter 5 (the outcome of the research) and 6 (relating the outcome to existing literature), this thesis idea is enabled to emerge “alone” as a comparison with previous literature might influence this thesis idea.

### **5.1 Incorporating and presenting ideas that are grounded in the data**

After an idea, grounded in the data, has emerged, a decision and understanding of how to present it has to be completed. In this section, three issues related to this issue are presented: the format for presenting an idea that is grounded in the data, the role of context in an idea, and the characteristics of conceptualization and description.

Urquhart (2013) and Birks and Mills (2011) suggest that a combination of the discussion form and visual or illustrative modeling (tables or figures) can be performed in the findings and analysis section, which is the approach taken in this thesis. That is, an analytical discussion generally followed by an illustrative figure and quotations from the gathered data, to highlight the emerged focused categories their concepts and relationships to one another.

During the analysis process, 30 initial core conceptual concepts (see appendix 2) was identified, which was later on placed in five focused categories that emerged during the analysis process: (1) identifying type of change; (2) institutional dynamics, (3) the importance of sufficient communication, participation, and resources to gain the support needed from the employees during organizational changes; (4) continually striving to improve and enhance the teams atmosphere; and (5) focusing on the emotions of those adversely impacted by the change. These focused categories were then linked to the sub-categories, as explained by Strauss and Corbin

(1998), condition, action, and outcome. Birks and Mills (2011) recommend that the idea, grounded in the data, is initially presented briefly as a whole before a researcher goes more in-depth into its including categories and concepts. Another recommendation presented by the authors is that the idea, grounded in the data, is presented in another chapter from current theories and literature as it enables the researchers' idea to stand by itself (Birks & Mills, 2011).

The role of context is of vital importance to take into consideration in this thesis as one of this thesis research questions is asking about factors that enable and hinder the managers, on an operational level, to manage a systemic change in a public organization such as the Armed Forces. The description of context can be described from aspects of macro including the conditions of social, political, and historical, and micro including conditions of day-to-day activities in the context of the studied phenomenon (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In this thesis, the context is understood as something that most likely influences the approach a manager takes on an operational level in the context of a public organization and my interpretation of the interviewee's perception on this aspect will be discussed in the upcoming section of this chapter.

The outcome of research undertaking a grounded theory, or theorizing, approach is always about forming a concept of an idea of something, and not to only describe something (Glaser, 2001). In this thesis, the idea grounded in the data aims to form a concept of an idea of something based on my interpretation that emerged during the data analysis of the interviewees experience and perception of the phenomenon under study (managing a systemic change on an operational level in the context of a public organization through the lenses of the case organization the Swedish Armed Forces). The initial core concepts (initial coding phase), focused categories (focused coding phase), and their sub-categories and relationships to one another (axial coding phase) emerged during this thesis analysis process on the manager's verbalization of the phenomena under study. Section 5.2-5.3 aims to present "the voice" of the interviewees and, thus, include some statements (quotations) made by them during the interviews, which may bear a resemblance to the methodology of qualitative data analysis and not grounded theorizing. Nonetheless, by using quotations, a robust grounding between the data and emerged idea grounded in the data is facilitated as well as shows where the idea(s) emerged.

The interviews included the themes the organization, influencing factors to lead a change and ways in leading change on an operational level and the following sections (5.2-5.3) provide an idea grounded in the data based on the data analysis of my interpretation on the gathered data

that emerged during the data analysis process on this thesis studied phenomenon: managing a systemic change on an operational level in the context of a public organization, which is performed through the a case study on the Armed Forces and viewed from the perspectives of three operational leveled managers in the case organization.

## **5.2 Perspectives on influencing factors in managing change**

As one of this thesis questions include *influencing factors that enables and hinders managers to lead a change*, questions regarding the organization and influencing factors to lead a change were asked. The structure of the following section follows the emerged and identified focused categories and its initial core concepts and relations (subcategories) to one another during the data analysis process. Three focused categories in terms of influencing factors in managing change (context) emerged during the data analysis: *institutional dynamics*, *type of change*, and *the importance of sufficient communication, participation, and resources*.

### **5.2.1 Institutional dynamics**

There were indications on the interviewees' general perception of the organization during the initial coding phase as the interviewees' general response of the Armed Forces included the initial emerged core concepts of *bureaucracy*, *hierarchy*, *large*, *old*, *geographically spread*, *long decision paths*, *several layers of management*, *military culture*, *structural inconsistencies*, *constant organizational changes*, and *elected representatives*. I latter on found that the initial identified core concepts could be found in other segments in the data where stemmed or connected words also explained how the organization was perceived by the interviewees. The initial core concept *military culture* included stemmed or connected words such as *order*, *command*, and *subordination* whereas *constant organizational changes* also was explained through words such as *organizational change*, *reorganization*, *dismantle*, *shut down*, *internal structural change*, and *refine*, and *elected representatives* explained as *top-down decision-making*.

Based on the data analysis, the interviewees perceived and described the Armed Forces as a large, old, bureaucratic, and a hierarchical public organization that is geographically spread along the country. One interviewee (Interviewee oug) stated that one might think that it is order and execution in the Armed Forces, but that it is the opposite as the decision paths are long due to bureaucracy and hierarchy. Another interviewee (Interviewee phw) also referred to the aspect of the organization being long and complex as well as that it does not work all the time:



*I call my closest manager and that manager calls someone in turn, and so on... And then, the actual issue has been forgotten when it finally has reached the right person. Take infrastructure issues as an example. They were working with that issue for ten years.... It is not working. (Interviewee phw).*

The interviewees saw institutional dynamics emerging from constant organizational changes and structural inconsistencies. One goal of the Armed Forces systemic changes was to simplify and clarify the management structure since there was a need to increase the organizations robustness and stamina in leadership skills (Swedish Armed Forces, 2017). All interviewees addressed the issue of the line management being long and complex in the organization wherein some of them meant that despite the fact that the organizations resources, such as employees, budget, and material, had drastically decreased during last two decades of on-going organizational changes, the amount of middle managers had been increasing. At the same time, the amount of people to actually manage had not increased, which the interviewees seemed to find illogical.

*You have taken down units, you have centralized... ...but in those blocks that you still have a lot of sections left. Just look at this place. We should have had one manager, that would have been enough because we were not more than that. So, I think that it actually has become more middle managers. I do not think that one has streamlined or rationalized in that aspect. That means that there is **yet** another layer of people that is going to do the staff-work. (Interviewee oug).*

During the data analysis process, the description of the organization regarding it being *bureaucratic, hierarchic, large, old, geographically spread, long decision paths, and several layers of management* was generally presented neutral but with some inclined concern that some things not always worked, such as presented in the first quotation above. There seemed to be some concerns that things such as infrastructure “took time” and could become “forgotten” as the decision paths were long and sometimes complex. Nonetheless, there seemed to be an overall acceptance that the organization simply is a military public organization that entails the characteristics that it entails as it is an organization that is *old, large, bureaucratic, hierarchic, and geographically spread*, aspects that, logically, may lead to *decision paths being long and management layers may be many*. All the interviewees had at the time of the interviews was conducted, worked for the organization at least 20 years where one interviewee stated that although the organizations decision paths might be long and include several layers of management, the organization still includes several appreciated advantages, such as that it “...has indulgence for family- and work-life, that it is balanced” (Interviewee phw).

All interviewees had, at the time of the interviews being conducted, worked for the organization for at least 20 years and, thus, had experienced multiple organizational changes during their time in the Armed Forces. The interviewees stated that the formerly undergone organizational changes included everything from simple and small *reorganizations* including *refinements* to more complex and big *reorganizations* including *dismantling* or *shutting down* units where the latter type of change seemed to be connected to a less positive attitude since it was "...about the people, their lives, their economy" (Interviewee oug) whereas a simple *reorganization* was used in a neutral or positive sense and described as "A lot of work on things that is not that difficult" (Interviewee oug). The interviewees' perception of the formerly undergone organizational changes seemed to include both neutral or positive reactions as well as negative ones, which seemed to be dependent on type of change where changes on a "larger scale" (complex and big) in which people may lose their jobs seemed to be more difficult to manage and include less positive memories in comparison to changes on a "smaller scale" (simple and small) since the outcome of those changes seemed to influence the employees less as it usually did not result in employees being without a job after such as change was implemented.

One interviewee (Interviewee phw) had experienced several organizational reforms where it had been decided to *dismantle* the whole Service Center and referred to the visits of the "...so called death-patrol" (Interviewee phw) prior to the closure of the department as well as the monthly and several happenings during those changes. Nevertheless, that Service Center was never shut down and they simply got refined, with a decreased number of employees and the same number of tasks. Another interviewee (Interviewee oug) referred to one *shut down* as "... where people happily put a knife in your back just to get an advantage of something".

Another perspective that referred to the constant organizational changes was presented by one of the interviewees' (Interviewee phw). The Armed Forces Logistics organization had existed for 16 years (2002-2018) prior to the structural organizational change implemented the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2019, but the interviewee (Interviewee phw) stated that "We just became good at what we are doing here", referring to the established informal and formal networks and recently gained understanding on how things can get done correctly and quickly in the organization.

During the data analysis, it was speculated that there is a dynamic between civil and military employees, and thus their associated cultures since the latter is schooled to deal with changes. The perception of constant organizational changes seemed to be slightly different between the interviewees, which was something that was most apparent between the civil managers and the

military manager where the latter appeared to be much more accepting and positive towards changes in general. One interviewee (interviewee pwz) also stated that people with military background were more accepting and supporting towards change in general, while the civilians were not. The interviewee (Interviewee pwz) meant that people with a military background are more prone to changes as they generally are schooled to deal with change. The other interviewees did not discuss the perspective of constant organizational changes from the perspective of “we have been schooled to deal with change” as such and described the aspect of constant changes in a more neutral manner such as “it is what it is”. The semi-structured theme interviews included premade support questions and did not include the aspect of military versus civilian culture. Thus, an eventual difference in culture is a research area that should be further examined. Despite the somewhat narrowed data collection regarding the field of perspectives within change between military and civilians, it can, however, be speculated that the reason for military people being more accepting towards change, in general, is because of they are schooled in how to think during times of change whereas civilians, in comparison to militaries, usually are less schooled within that field.

*I think that it is easier for us [people with a military background], to a certain part. Because we are schooled to deal with change as we are thinking tactical “if I lose one man what will I do then” ...So, you live with that kind of thinking about change. Just because you go into a task that looks like one way, it doesn’t mean that you will come out one the other side and that it will look the same. That is what all war says, that is how it always will be. (Interviewee pwz)*

One of the interviewees was very particular in explaining one of the reasons for the constant changes in the organization and referred to the organization being governed by *elected representatives* who are the ones deciding the organization's orientation and mission depending on the global security environment since the organization ultimately exists to defend national security. As a result of the Armed Forces being a public military organization, it was, thus, speculated that change is a *natural* and *necessary part* in the process. Owing to the organization undergoing changes constantly, one interviewee (Interviewee pwz) meant that all employees in the organization, thus, have to be prepared that it is a changeable environment, which seemed to not be the case in that particular Service Center as it was stated that some employees were, still, not accepting some of the ongoing changes.

*I believe that you, when you take a job in the Swedish Armed Forces, you have to be prepared that it is a changeable environment. ...you cannot become employed and believe that it will be exactly like that for 20 years. If you think that, then you are thinking wrong. (Interviewee pwz).*

The same interviewee (Interviewee pwz) also placed emphasis that the organization comprises a military culture of order and command that is to be obeyed without discussion after a decision has been made by higher leveled management. Any concerns and comments could be shared if they had authorization to share them but according to the interviewee (Interviewee pwz) “when the decisions is made, it is made” which they then had to obey.

### **5.2.2 Identifying type of change**

As one of this thesis questions is *how managers lead a systemic change*, it is of importance to understand what this type of change actually entails as type of change influences how managers lead a change (see e.g. Ha, 2014).

The ongoing changes were described with several different concepts. The initial core concepts identifying type of change was *cultural change*. The change was, however, also described as an *organizational change*, *reorganization*, *dismantle*, *shut down*, *internal structural change*, and *refine*. The ongoing changes was described as something that contained several different activities to achieve new ways of working and altered organizational rules, structure, responsibilities, and expectations on their employees. The interviewees also acknowledged that one of the biggest changes that the Armed Forces Logistics is undergoing is the fact that they have gone from a phase of peace to a phase of crisis and war resulting in mandatory international duty, more participation in military trainings, added military educations, personal skills training, and security clearings.

Based on the data analysis, the interviewees both perceived and stated that the organization was becoming bigger and that the change towards a crisis and war phase ultimately included a *change in culture*.

*It is a change of culture; it is an astronomical cultural change. They started as storage keepers with no qualifications at all in terms of what was demanded from them. ...And then, then the mandatory international duty came and that was a huge change for them as you can get fired if you do not participate. And then, then the order to become a war unit came, and everything that comes with that. Today, if you talk about ‘employee excellence’... what is expected from you? You are supposed to be active, share your knowledge with others; you are supposed to search for knowledge and tasks yourself. This is not the people we initially hired. (Interviewee oug).*

### **5.2.3 The importance of sufficient communication, participation, and resources**

The initial emerged core concepts regarding the managers need to better manage their employees during the on-going changes could be identified in the constantly recurring concepts

or underlying meanings such as *communication*, *participation* and *time and resources*. The initial core concept *communication* also was explained through the stemmed word *information*. The initial core concepts could also be related to the concepts of *uncertainty* including stemmed words such as *unclear*, *I do not know*, *maybe*, *I believe*, and *I have no idea*, and the concepts of *speculation*, *togetherness*, *follow-up*, *long-term tasks*, *holistic view*, and (type of) *attitude*. The initial core concepts and their relations to one another is explained in the following paragraphs followed by a figure visualizing the finding.

The interviewees stated that the communication before and during the change process was scarce from the higher departments to the operational level. The interviewees were in consensus that an enhanced communication was needed to better understand what was expected from the operational level to ultimately better lead their employees. Managers that do not have enough (or any, or wrong for that matter) understanding of change activities regarding how and why they are to be performed may be something that affects several things. For instance, it may result in the manager having a reduced holistic view (one of the managers tasks) as well as that they are communicating tasks unclearly to the employees, which is something that can be connected to the initial core concepts *speculation*. Delivering an unclear message regarding, for instance, how activities are to be performed may be speculated to result in activities being performed and completed incorrectly, which may be something that has to be redone in the correct way, leading to unnecessary *time and resources* being upheld as it becomes “double-work”. Delivering an unclear message regarding why activities are to be performed may also influence the employees support towards the organizational changes as a non-understanding of why things are done may influence their perception of “the whole”: something that may be needed for them to not lose the “momentum” during the organizational change as well as understanding of the “end-goal”.

During the data analysis, it seemed like the interviewees were *uncertain* about the implementation process and outcome of the ongoing changes, which was a concept that was inextricably and dynamically intertwined with the initial core concept *communication*. The category *uncertain* was understood as an outcome of a lack in *communication* during the ongoing organizational changes. For instance, one interviewee (Interviewee phw) seemed to be uncertain about the outcome of the structural organizational change. Another subcategory connected to the initial core concept *communication* was *speculation*. The concept speculation was not verbally stated as such by the interviewees, but something that was indicated in connection to them being uncertain about something within the ongoing changes were they,

thus, started to speculate about the reasons for the scarce communication but also within questions regarding the ongoing changes, such as the outcome of the activities performed during the on-going changes. For instance, reasons for the communication being scarce was conjectured to be due to the higher leveled department using it as a power-tool as “...knowledge is power...” (Interviewee, pwz).

Another finding from all interviewees was a desire to have representatives from the operational level participating in the decision-making process within the unit. For instance, one interviewee believed that the Service Centers ultimately are the ones in direct contact with the other military organizations and, thus, understand the operational process better than some of the people sitting in higher positions.

*There should be more participation. Then you might think, “What does a storekeeper actually know?” Well, actually, they have pretty good ideas, if they would have been given the chance to participate and have a say in it. (Interviewee oug).*

The concept *uncertainty*, leading to eventual *speculation* was also connected to the initial core concept *participation* as having a possibility to enhance knowledge and understanding, thus, minimizing an eventual outcome of uncertainty and speculation. For instance, the higher-leveled management was by the interviewees speculated to have a lack of understanding on the operational leveled individuality and situation, “...things like people’s behaviors, their attitude, how people receive a change...” (Interviewee oug), as orders, plans, and directives were too theoretically written. This outcome reflects a lack in communication and participation between the departments. Nonetheless, the interviewees were placing lots of emphasis on *togetherness*, which was another subcategory that was inextricably and dynamically intertwined with the initial core concept *participation*. Constantly recurring concepts within the category *togetherness* was *team*, *teambuilding*, *belonging*, *together*, *group*, and *everyone*. The concept of togetherness could be seen as something positive as the feeling of “belonging” and maybe even “importance” could result in a positive attitude towards change, which thus, makes it an important factor to take into consideration during an organizational change as the employees (type of) *attitude* may be something that influences the outcome of an organizational change (see e.g. Kotter, 2012; Reinholz & Apkarian, 2018).

The operational leveled departments were merely *followed-up* by higher leveled management during the ongoing changes, which was another concept that was inextricably and dynamically intertwined with the initial core concepts *communication* and *participation*. Being followed-up

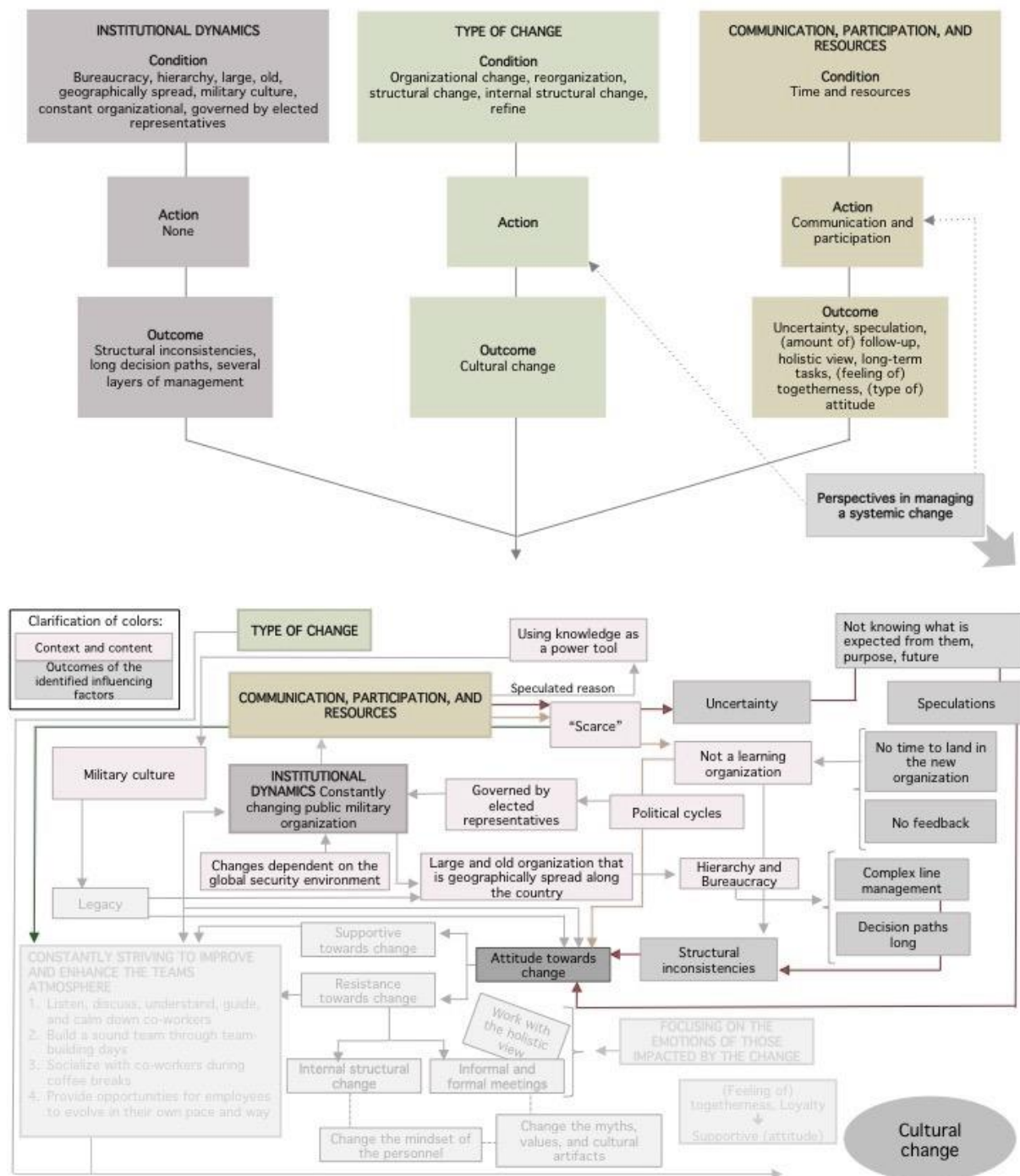
by upper management can be considered as an activity that enhances the feeling of participation while also enhancing a good communication between another and reducing eventual *uncertainties* as follow-ups may be used as a forum for operational leveled personnel to ask questions about things that are unclear as well as for the higher leveled to “get the message through”. Nevertheless, one interviewee ironically said that his/hers superior “...has at least called me two times” (Interviewee phw) since the Armed Forces Logistics Commander in Chief officially informed that the organization was undergoing an organizational change. The interviewees, however, wanted more follow-ups during the on-going changes.

*We have neither gotten feedback on the risk analysis that we sent, how they have managed that one. How did the risk analysis look like for our Service Centre? How did it look like for the whole unit? We would have wanted feedback on that. (Interviewee oug).*

Moreover, the overall task of an operational manager was described as to work with *long-term tasks* and the departments’ *holistic view*. The findings, however, show that, in addition to the majority of orders from the higher leveled department was (1) distributed with a short time-frame for completion resulting in the operational managers barely having any time to analyze and plan their departments, and (2) not worked through enough on the next level: the operational managers *time and resources* to work with the departments long-term tasks and holistic view was, unfortunately, limited. Having the time and resources seemed to be an aspect that both was and should be of importance during organizational changes, as it is needed for the operational managers to lead their employees in the “right” direction and, thus, a change process to successfully proceed.

The initial core concept of both managers and employees *time and resources* to work with the organizational change was something I understood as influencing several aspects during an organizational change. Not having the time nor the resources to work with change issues may influence the amount of *communication* between both upper management and the operational managers as well as between the operational managers and their employees. Amount of time and resources may also influence amount of *participation* during the on-going changes. Not having the time or resources to thoroughly work through an order to clearly *communicate* the reason for and how a certain activity should be performed may lead to *uncertainty* and *speculation*, which may affect (type of) *attitude* towards a change. A lack of participation may also influence the feeling of *togetherness*, and a lack of feeling and belonging to something

may influence (type of) attitude towards an organizational change. Figure 2 visualizes the ideas presented in section 5.2.



**Figure 2.** The relations between the focused category (institutional dynamics, type of change, and communication, participation and resources), its initial core concepts and relationships to one another.



### 5.3 Perspectives in managing a systemic change

As one of this thesis questions is *how managers, on an operational level, lead a systemic change*, questions regarding this issue were asked. The focused categories were found to be constantly striving to improve and enhance the team's atmosphere and focusing on the emotions of those adversely impacted by the change. The initially identified core concepts relevance in each focused category will be described in the following subsections.

#### 5.3.1 Constantly striving to improve and enhance the teams atmosphere

During the initial coding phase of the interviews, there were indications on the interviewees' general perception in leading a change on an operational level. Some of the initial core concepts found in the data were *people, listen, discuss, understand, guide, and calm down*. The initial core concept *people* also included the stemmed word *individual*. During the analysis, all initial core concepts except for people was ultimately understood as actions that could be performed to ultimately *improve and enhance the teams atmosphere* (outcome), which is one of the identified and emerged focused categories for answering how managers, on an operational level, lead a systemic change. The actions of *listening, discussing, understanding, guiding, and calming down* could latter on be linked to the concepts of *time and resources* (condition), as well as (feeling of) *togetherness*, (type of) *attitude*, and *loyalty* (outcome).

The personnel's attitude towards the organizations systemic change has an impact in how to lead change on an operational level. One interviewee experienced employees with overall excitement about changes, while the majority had been met with resistance about these changes. Therefore, the description of change management approaches included both similarities and differences, as some of the employees were supportive while others were resistant towards the on-going changes.

*...the employees, still, do not accept that they are combats. Meanwhile, the other Service Centers, they may also have had that attitude, but they have still been thinking that "this is going to be fun". In here, you dwell instead... (Interviewee pwz).*

While the situation might differ depending on where in the organization a manager is at, and the fact that all individuals react inversely, a good team atmosphere to strive for is important, as people more or less influence one another within a department. Furthermore, the most important job for an operational manager will be to always:

1. Listen, discuss, understand, guide, and calm down co-workers

2. Build a sound team through team-building days, for example
3. Socialize with coworkers during coffee breaks
4. Provide opportunities for employees to evolve in their own pace and way.

*I believe that it is important to socialize with the employees during coffee breaks. I also believe that we have built a strong bond through our yearly trips and little Christmas celebrations together, which we have done for 18 years now. I believe that it is a winning factor, to get everyone on board with that. (Interviewee phw).*

*Time and resources* could be seen as an aspect that needed to be in place in order for the managers to listen, discuss, understand, guide, and calm down the employees. A logical explanation for the importance of time and resources is that it simply is something that the interviewees would need to perform those actions. While having, or being provided the opportunity to have, enough time and resources to successfully manage a change on an operational level may be an apparent factor, that kind of wanted condition may not always be an obvious one in practice. The majority of the interviewees also stated that they did not have enough time to, for instance, plan the long-term tasks for the Service Centers as everyday tasks more often than not would fall on their lap. Thus, it can be speculated that type of tasks that the interviewees work with are based on “priority”. Each interviewee’s exact prioritizes is, however, left for speculation in this thesis. Nonetheless, not prioritizing enough time to listen, discuss, understand, guide, and calm down the employees may, for instance, lead to a worsened and decreased team atmosphere that, in turn, may influence the employees’ attitude negatively towards change and vice versa. In addition to added tasks connected to the systemic change, the interviewees also stated that everyday tasks had to continue in almost the same pace as well. Thus, it can be speculated that it may be challenging to find a balance in successfully leading a Service Center with on-going everyday tasks and change issues.

Another finding was that, as the headline of the focused category indicates, the interviewees were aiming for the employees to feel some sort of *togetherness*. Speculating about the importance of *togetherness* can be discussed from several perspectives. The most important one in the context on managing a change on an operational level in a public organization such as the Armed Forces, may be the feeling of togetherness raising the “feeling of us” simultaneously raising the feeling of being an important part in the organization as they are being seen, heard, listened to, understood, and guided, which may raise the feeling of responsibility of “doing the deeds” and being *loyal* to both co-workers and the employer. To conclude, the actions taken by the interviewees is understood as something performed to enhance the employees feeling of

togetherness and loyalty towards both one another and the employer to have employees that are supportive towards the changes and, thus, as seemingly as possible undergo a systemic change and ultimately achieve a cultural change.

### **5.3.2 Focusing on the emotions of those adversely impacted by the change**

The interviewees' presented different approaches to manage a change on an operational level where the ones that had a majority of personnel resistant towards change seemed to have additional actions for gaining the support of the employees. Some of the initial core concepts found in the data were (type of) *attitude*, (amount of) *understanding*, *learning*, *legacy*, *informal and formal meetings*, *internal structural change* and *holistic view*.

The initial core concept *legacy* also included the stemmed word *history* and *internal structural change* the stemmed words *relocating employees*, *restructuring the whole department*, *replacing managers*, and *changing the language*.

The initial core concepts *legacy* and (type of) *attitude* (resistant in this case), (amount of) *understanding*, and *time and resource* could be understood as conditions that influenced the actions. This can be interpreted as *focusing on the emotions of those impacted by the change* through *participation* and *learning* by adding *informal and formal meetings* connected to the change, to work with making the employees understand the *holistic view*, as well as to *undergo a structural shift to realize a symbolic shift* by *relocating employees*, *restructuring the whole department*, *replacing managers* and *changing the language*.

The outcome of the actions can also be understood as a changed *attitude* to be supportive towards the changes rather than resistant as well as an enhanced *loyalty* towards the organization and *understanding* about both the process and the outcome of the change.

It is necessary and for some people optimistic to break the day-by-day routines to improve further (Interviewee phw). Although the majority of the data revealed managers in a more challenging situation. One of the interviewees defined the situation as "World war II" (Interviewee oug), as other issues persisted in addition to the ongoing systemic change. The majority of the interviewees meant that working within the same role for several years had led to stagnation and verbal fighting within the department resulting in some employees being negative towards everything in general.

*We have "the legacy" here. There have been people that worked in the same section that have worked here for 15 years that do not talk to one another. Those*

*people have started to train together now. The responsibility over the personnel takes a lot, but slowly... ...It was the world war here when I started working at this department. There was so much fighting. It has taken a year for me to make it calm down and put "oil on the wall". It is like walking on a fine and slippery line. If I lose one foot off the line, then BANG! The employees start arguing: "In 1991, then...!". (Interviewee oug).*

Related to this is the response from one interviewee, where employees still did not accept that they were combats, even though it had been two years after it was decided that the Armed Forces was shifting from a phase of peace to crisis and war. Employees argued against and dwelled about being combats as they meant that they were hired as civilians, and in this case storekeepers, that work from 7-16 o'clock. One of the interviewees meant that managers must have courage to step up in situations that become unmanageable where negativity may start to impact other employees in an unwanted matter.

*You have to have courage to step up in these situations. I told that person that I was so damn sick of name wining during our employee meeting. ...I told that person "there is the door, there is a boom right now and it is time for you to apply for another job, because I cannot listen to this anymore. 1971, 1972, 1991, all of the managers are idiots". ...It is dragging down the group and there are a lot of people that works here... Name told me: "you cannot tell me what to say" and I said: "yes, actually, I can, because this is not according to the organizations values nor code of conduct. You are neither loyal to your managers nor your tasks". Those are so good, the values and code of conduct, I have them with me all the time and can relate to them. There is a new errand every week. (Interviewee oug).*

It was also implied that some of the employees do not understand that they are working for a public organization governed by elected representatives, and that changes may arise following the political cycle. It was also insinuated that employees do not understand that they are working for a public military organization with a culture of order and command, where final order is to be obeyed without discussion.

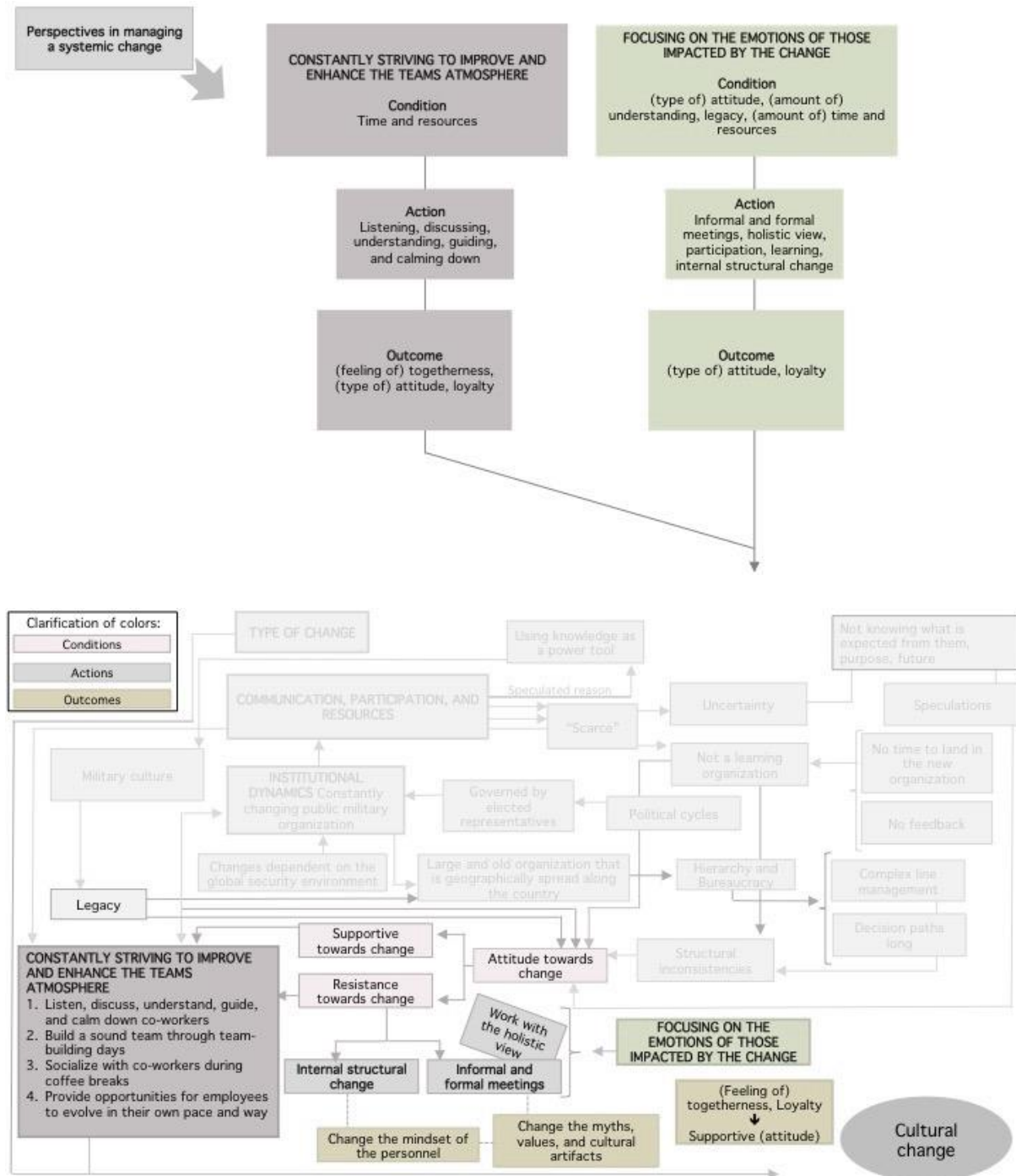
*If the manager has made a decision, then **that** is what is applied. You cannot go and say; "now this idiot has made this decision". I mean, you cannot. ...If I would have authorization to share any of my concerns and comments before the decision has been made, well, then I will share them and then keep quiet. When the decision is made, it is made, and I cannot change that fact. (Interviewee pwz).*

One of the main activities performed to improve the working environment were additional meetings and informal sittings where they would go through new tasks and eventual concerns together. One of the interviewees explained that when a new task would come, all involved employees would be gathered so they could go through the task together. This was done

continuously and stated to be an ongoing process. Based on the data analysis, this was a practice performed to guide the employees reasoning through *participation* and *learning*.

Another main activity performed to improve the working environment was to *undergo a structural shift to realize a symbolic shift*, which was taken by one Service Center including the main activities to *relocate employees to other sections, restructure the whole department, and replace all managers* to help the situation. The structural change in the Service Center was supposedly only intended to change its values, myths, and cultural artifacts. However, three years after and still ongoing the same change, this turned out to be a difficult task according to the interviewees.

A citation revealing a time-consuming but important task of managers: that is the need to change employees' mindset of "it was better before" and constantly strive towards an improved working environment. Nonetheless, due to the long and seemingly difficult task to realize a symbolic shift due to, for instance, the departments *legacy*, the condition of *time and resources* was something that, during the data analysis, was understood as something that was needed to achieve the end-goal: to change the attitude of the personnel to be more *supportive* towards the changes rather than resistant. As previously mentioned, the actions were performed to enhance the employees feeling of togetherness and loyalty towards both one another and the employer to have employees supportive towards the changes and, thus, as seemingly as possible undergo a systemic change and ultimately achieve a cultural change. Figure 3 visualizes the ideas presented in section 5.2.



**Figure 3.** The relations between the focused category (constantly striving to improve and enhance the team's atmosphere and focusing on the emotions of those impacted by the change), its initial core concepts and relationships to one another.

## 6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This thesis conducts a case study of the Armed Forces by means of gathering qualitative data and through the methodology of grounded theorizing. The purpose of this study is to explore how managers, on an operational level, manage a systemic change in the context of a public organization. The purpose of this study is also to explore potential factors that enable and hinder managers to manage a systemic change in the context of a public organization.

This chapter places this thesis idea, grounded in the data, into the context of prior literature within the phenomenon of managing a systemic change on an operational level within public organizations (6.1.1-6.1.2). This chapter also presents this thesis conclusions (6.1.3) based on the findings and discussion as well as limitations and suggestions for further research (6.1.4).

### 6.1 Managing a systemic change on an operational level in the Swedish Armed Forces

The structure of the following subsections is divided based on this thesis questions: influencing factors that enables and hinders managers to lead a change (6.1.1) and how managers, on an operational level, lead a systemic change (6.1.2).

#### 6.1.1 Perspectives on influencing factors in managing change

**Institutional dynamics.** The Armed Forces undergo organizational changes continually as it is a public military organization that is dependent on factors such as the political cycle in Sweden and global security environment as the organization exists to defend national security and, hence, change phases of peace to crisis and war when needed. This notion is supported by Bergström et al. (2014) and Kamara (2018) who mean that the fact that the Armed Forces is a public military organization that results in eventual changes in the organization's missions and goals and amount of distributed budget from the government (and, thus, amount of resources), which is dependent on several influencing factors such as the previously exemplified ones.

Based on the results, the Armed Forces is a highly institutionalized organization that is large, old, and geographically spread along the country that includes features of bureaucracy and hierarchy, resulting in lengthy and complicated decision paths and several layers of management. This view aligns with several authors who state that the Armed Forces can be considered as an old and immense organization as well as that its process in decision-making is relatively long (see e.g. Bergström et al., 2014; Wynen et al., 2016). In addition, former organizational changes have resulted in structural inconsistencies, which might have

consequences for the successful management of the ongoing changes as such outcomes may influence the attitudes of the employees. Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004) also point out that several former public management reforms have shown that they may generate an outcome that is worse than before. Several other scholars mean that the implementation of organizational changes is a challenge within the public sector and that there are several former cases where public management reforms have gone wrong since they failed to produce the benefits they primarily claimed (see e.g. Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004; Fernandez & Rainey, 2006; Isett et al., 2013; Van der Voet, 2016).

Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004) present one reasonable explanation for the implemented organizational changes in the Armed Forces leading to structural inconsistencies when stating that there are several examples where organizational changes, in general, have shown that old constraints are reappearing in new clothes. An example of such a case may be found in the Armed Forces as, for instance, the line management has remained complex despite the organization's tremendous reduction in both size and resources during the last two decades as well as, in some cases, remained the same number of tasks but decreased the number of employees. Leeman (1976) seems to capture another point of view in connection to this issue when he states that public organizations develop tasks unsystematically as well as are incapable of meeting new demands due to coordination that is poor, clumsy and ill.

From the perspective of change and public organizations, Marcinkevičiūtė & Žukovskis (2016) mean that society's needs and demands and accelerating pace of societal change influence and pressure the public sector to undergo reforms to provide faster and better services to society: something that can be identified in the findings of this thesis as well since the Armed Forces has an extensive history in organizational changes starting from the late 1980s (Bergström et al., 2014). The phenomenon of change is also stated to be a natural and normal response to external and internal conditions (see e.g. Luecke, 2003; Leifer, 1989; By, 2005).

Owing to the organization continually changing due to external factors that cannot be influenced by the organization as such, the findings display that operational leveled managers might think that the employees, thus, have to be prepared that it is a changeable environment. Kaufman (1971), however, means that there are some obstacles of change that have to be conquered in organizations as they include features adverse to change, such as different cultures of bureaucracy, which includes members that disrupt innovative impulses. Leemans (1976) presents a perspective connected to that of Kaufman (1971) when he states that change



processes may result in tension as members may see them as threats since organizations have integrated devices that aim at maintaining stability. These views are supported by these findings as the majority of managers is in a more difficult situation where employees are resistant towards the ongoing changes.

The findings display that the Armed Forces is an organization that comprises a military culture of order and command that is to be obeyed without discussion after higher leveled management has made a decision: regardless if there is an ongoing change or not. This view clashes with arguments in insights in systems thinking as an organization, from that perspective is considered as a complex phenomenon on its own and not order, predictability, and control (Bodhanya, 2016). In addition, Kahane (2004) means that command and control are aspects adverse during situations of change and that it is imperative to be both receptive and adaptive to ideas as well as that everyone should be ready to move beyond “common practice” or zones of comfort and be open to eventual difficulties.

The Armed Forces Logistics organization had existed for 16 years (2002-2018) before the structural, organizational change, which, according to the findings, is the amount of time needed to identify best practice within, for example, routines and roles. Similarly, scholars argue that there is a delay in public management reforms. That is, the full benefits of substantial changes in the processes and structures in public organizations are usually not realized until three to five years, or more, after an organizational change is implemented as, for instance, new operating procedures need to be designed, formulated, and refined, and new roles defined. (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004). In line with that of Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004), Ha (2014) argue that constant changes yield less desirable outcomes, as routines are a necessity for employees to be productive. On the other end, the authors also argue that discontinuous changes may not be able to produce the desired outcome over a more extended period (Ha, 2014).

Based on the above, the Armed Forces can be considered as a highly institutionalized organization that includes features such as bureaucracy and hierarchy, which may be followed by the challenge of to manage a systemic change as both small and significant changes is something that can be difficult to embrace in such an organization as it may be seen as a threat (see e.g. Leemans, 1976; Wynen et al., 2016; Swedish Armed Forces, n.d.d). There may also be a clash in leading a change from the viewpoint of the organization including a military culture of order and command as scholars argue that such features do not work during situations of change (Kahane, 2004). Bergström, Styhre, and Thilander (2014) state that the Armed Forces

is an organization in which cynicism may be flowing, which has been formed by the resistance driven by unsuccessful implementations of organizational changes. Another perspective that can be taken into consideration is that the Armed Forces also include civil employees who may be less accustomed to “military change culture” in comparison to militaries, which may affect the overall reception towards change in the organization as employees may influence one another. That, coupled with the organization undergoing changes constantly as it is dependent and influenced by the surrounding environment makes, in my opinion, the case of change and management in the context of a public organization both an interesting and complex one as there are several factors or conditions that influence how change can be or is managed in such an organization (see e.g. Leemans, 1976; Burnes, 2009; Coram & Burnes, 2001).

**Communication, participation, and resources** are factors that may be scarce during organizational changes in the Armed Forces. Due to institutional dynamics, it may be difficult to “get the word out” in the organization as it includes features such as layers of management, and long, complex line management. It may also be challenging to participate in the process of decision-making as it is a public military organization where elected representatives make the ultimate decisions and the overall culture to be followed by all employees is "order and command". The literature also highlights the importance of communication and participation during times of change as it, for instance, may be seen as a preventive act towards the emergence of gossips or rumors, things that should be avoided during times of change. Communication and participation are also identified as factors that heighten a mutual understanding between employers, something that is needed to gain support from employees (Schmidt et al., 2017; Bodhanya, 2014). For instance, Bodhanya (2016) argue that mutual understanding can be gained through connectivity mediated through communication and dialogue between one another. Another perspective regarding the importance of communication and participation is provided by Schmidt et al. (2017) and Kotter (2011), who means that support from the employees’ is necessary for the change process to successfully proceed and that such support can be enhanced through communication.

The findings display that there is a desire to have representatives from the operational level participating in the decision-making process. Employees on an operational level are ultimately the ones in direct contact with the other military organizations and, thus, the ones that understand the operational process better than some of the people placed in higher positions. This view is aligned with that of Dunsire and Hood (1989) who point out that employees participating in the change process not only create a support for change but that it also is

beneficial for managers as employees on an operational level are regarded as more informed as they are the ones delivering public services, and, thus, the ones that understand its practice. Van der Voet et al. (2015) also emphasize employees participating in a change as they, hence, probably would be more dedicated to the change. Similarly, Reinholz & Apkarian (2018) and Taylor & Adelman (2007) argue that managers should consult with and include people that are influenced by the change during such circumstances and that organizations can and should deliberately work for solutions that interrupt hierarchy and endorse equity.

Another finding is the higher-leveled managements lack understanding of the operational leveled individuality and situation as orders, plans, and directives may be too theoretically written. This view may be understood as an outcome of a lack of communication and participation between employees and managers at all levels within the organization. As exemplified beforehand, Bodhanya (2016) argue that a mutual understanding can be mediated through communication between one another as is the understanding regarding the case of the Armed Forces ongoing systemic changes during the targeting period of 2016-2020, the scare communication results in a lack of understanding between department levels. Connected to this is Jarrett's (2003) argument who mean that the roots of resistance towards change are fear and survival, which may be features that arise during occasions of a lack of communication and participation and, thus, understanding of an ongoing change.

The findings show that managers on an operational level may be in a less wanted position where they are merely followed-up by higher leveled management during ongoing changes. The findings also show that operational leveled managers may want more follow-ups as it is something that enables them to know better what to improve in their work connected to the organizational change. This view is aligned with that of Bodhanya (2016), Taylor and Adelman (2007), Beech and MacIntosh (2012), Jabari (2012) and Dawson and Andrioppulos (2014) who point out the importance of openness to learning through feedback and regular reviews. Jabari (2012) also argue that learning opportunities are of vital importance as eventual failures can be avoided by trial and error.

The overall task of an operational manager is described as to work with long-term tasks and the departments' holistic view. Bass (1985 in Helms-Mills & Mills, 2008, p. 125) also argue that transformational leaders "...transcend short-term exchanges and goals by heightening followers' awareness about big picture organizational goals, and issues". The findings, however, show that the operational leveled manager's time and resources to work with the

department's long-term tasks and the holistic view is limited. Nonetheless, in line with the findings that reveals the operational managers desire to have more time and resources to work with the departments long-term tasks and holistic view, Adelman and Taylor (2007) also point out that a readiness for change is enhanced through a commitment in policy that is altered into suitable resources, leadership, budget, and time. The authors also state that the lack of attention and time to (1) create a strategy that enables employees to be ready towards changes, and (2) accommodate changes of leadership and staff, are some of the reasons for the failure of a majority of organizational changes (Adelman & Taylor, 2007).

Drawing conclusions from above, influencing factors in successfully managing a change may be connected to aspects of communication, participation, mutual understanding, and regular reviews. Such factors may, however, be challenging to uphold during organizational changes due to multiple factors, such as a lack of time and resources to work with the change issues. According to the systemic change literature, enough time and resources is of vital importance in order for the change process to successfully proceed due to several reasons as it, for instance, may enable managers to clearly communicate the reason for the importance of an organizational change and, thus, gain support of the employees (see e.g. Adelman & Taylor, 2007; Schmidt et al., 2017; Kotter, 2011). All in all, there is a considerable amount of evidence that demonstrate that the implementation of organizational change often fails where reasons often is alleged to be dependent on the management's lack of engagement, knowledge, and patience, which may be something that simply originates due to a lack of time and resources to work with change issues, as well as lack of communication and participation, resulting in a lack of understanding on what is supposed to be done during the ongoing change (see, e.g., Sörqvist, 2004; Bergström et al., 2014; By, 2005; Kotter, 1996).

**Type of change** may influence how managers lead a change since management approaches may be different depending on aspects of change frequency and size (Ha, 2014). Based on the findings, the change in the case organization is a change in culture, which includes a change of structure in the whole organization, the ways of working, and organizational rules. These findings may be something that is close in line with the concepts of public management reform and systemic change where the latter is described as to transform or redesign a whole system and something that "...involves modifications that amount to a cultural shift in institutionalized values (i.e., reculturalization)" (Adelman & Taylor, 2007, p. 57) and public management reform defined as "Deliberate attempts to change the structures, processes, and/or cultures of public sector organizations with the objective of getting them (in some sense) to run better" (Pollitt &

Bouckaert, 2017, p. 2). The concepts of systemic change and public management reform is understood as quite similar to one another in this thesis and very close line with findings of the ongoing changes in the case organization.

Continuing on the track of the organization undergoing a systemic change and public management reform, the findings display that one of the most significant changes that the Armed Forces Logistics is undergoing is the fact that they have gone from a phase of peace to phase of crisis and war resulting in mandatory international duty, more participation in military training, and added military educations, personal skills training, and security clearings. The new crisis and war organization have amounted to new ways of working and altered organizational rules, structure, responsibilities, and expectations on their employees. These notions are supported by Wagener (1993), Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004), and Ghavifekr and Hussin (2011) who mean that such a change influence the whole structure or character of a government. Advocates within systemic change also place emphasis on this matter when they argue that such a change ultimately mean to redesign a whole system, such as to alter aspects of policies, relationships, routines, values, and power structures (Reiser & Dempsey, 2007; Reinhold and Apkarian, 2018; Adelman & Taylor, 2007; Taylor, 2016, Abercrombie et al., 2015).

In conclusion, the literature and findings are aligned as the findings display that the systemic change primarily include a change of an organization's culture, which is only realized when the outcome of the change is the new kind of normal since the outcome of a systemic change is a cultural change as it responses to external stimuli (cf. Kotter, 1996; Reinhold and Apkarian, 2018; Adelman & Taylor, 2007; Senge, 2006). Another finding is that a change of culture necessitates a change of symbols, structure, and processes, something that is in line with the literature in systemic change (see e.g. Reinholz & Apkarian, 2018).

### **6.1.2 Perspectives in managing a systemic change**

**Continually striving to improve and enhance the teams' atmosphere.** While the situation might differ depending on where in the organization a manager is at, and the fact that all individuals react inversely, a pleasant team atmosphere to strive for is essential, as people more or less influence one another within a department. Improving and enhancing a team's atmosphere can be performed through several different activities, such as team days, and by listening, discussing, understanding, and guiding employees. This view is, although slightly scattered and perhaps in some cases not crystal clear, shared in the literature within insights in systems thinking, systemic change, and change management as they present different activities

in building a community of engagement, coherence, and mutual understanding, such as communication, dialogue, and participation (see e.g. Bodhanya, 2016; Reinholz & Apkarian, 2018; Adelman & Taylor, 2007; Kotter, 2012; Schmidt, 2017). For instance, Reinholz & Apkarian (2018), Adelman and Taylor (2007), Higgs and Roland (2005) state that consultation with and involvement of the people is to be performed during times of change by providing support, empowering employees, concentrating on positive and broad outcomes, having change teams, coming together to develop shared goals that include individual concerns, building areas of cohesion, and providing roadmaps by offering a path in what way they can reach the desired future state. Reinholz and Apkarian (2018) and Adelman and Taylor (2007) also mean that a shared vision for an organization or unit can help form the course of upcoming change proposals to coordinate the desires of the people working there as well as build coherence amongst the ideals and goals. In this manner, individuals may see areas of cohesion between their goals that else would not be apparent. On the other hand, Kotter (2012), Luecke (2003) and Hamel (2000) mean that the key factors in change management is to develop a sense of urgency by understanding and to inform the significance of the change, involving people in the change, as well as to be committed to the change, the team, and to have a clear vision.

Based on the findings, the personnel's attitude towards the 'organization's systemic change impact how a change is lead on an operational level as a type of attitude influence the approach a manager takes to manage a change on an operational level successfully. In other words, the findings present different management approaches during times of change that included both similarities and differences since some employees may be more supportive and others resistant towards the ongoing changes. It can, therefore, be speculated that organizations respective departments include different subcultures and perspectives as they may perceive and receive the ongoing changes differently, resulting in different ways to manage a change in each department. Similarly, Reinholz & Apkarian (2018, 3), Dandeker and Gow (1999), and Adelman and Taylor (2007) argue that there are different cultures within an organization as there may be both diverse subcultures and perspectives, depending on the individual and, hence, no one size fits all approach to managing change.

To conclude previously discussed, employees are either initially supportive or resistant to change. Type of attitude (supportive or resistant) influence the approach taken by the operational managers, whose main task can be speculated to be to gain the support from the employees ultimately. While the situation might differ depending on where in the organization a manager is at, and the fact that all individuals react inversely, managers should always strive

for a good team atmosphere, irrespective if an organization is undergoing an organizational change or not. Improving and enhancing a team's atmosphere can be performed through several different activities, such as team days, and by listening, discussing, understanding, and guiding employees. This view is, although slightly scattered and perhaps not crystal clear, shared in the literature within insights in systems thinking, systemic change, and change management as they present different ways in building a community of engagement, coherence, and mutual understanding, such as communication, dialogue, and participation (see e.g. Bodhanya, 2016; Reinholz & Apkarian, 2018; Adelman & Taylor, 2007; Kotter, 2012; Schmidt, 2017).

**Focusing on the emotions of those adversely impacted by the change.** The results revealed the majority of managers in a more challenging situation where employees are resistant towards the ongoing changes and non-accepting about the changed organizational rules. Taylor (2016) seem to provide somewhat of an explanation to this finding while stating that moving beyond boundaries of understood practice or comfort zones is difficult as humans have self-reflective consciousness by nature. Similarly, Reinholz and Apkarian (2018) point out that individuals tend to focus and fixate on problems rather than the preferred solution. Schmidt et al. (2017) also mean that both support and resistance to change may be aspects that appear both during the process of change as well as a result of a change. Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) and Leemans (1976) present another eventual explanation to this issue when they state that change processes can result in tension as members may see them as threats since organizations have integrated devices that aim at maintaining stability as organizations usually prefer a predictable and stable existence.

The findings show that managers must have “personal skills” and courage to step up in situations that become unmanageable as a negative atmosphere may impact employees in an unwanted matter. This view is aligned with that of Beech and MacIntosh (2013, p. 3) as they state that managing change is about the basis of having the personal skills to handle the assessment of different situations. Reinholz and Apkarian (2018) present ways to address personnel resistant towards changes, such as to change “symbols” by altering or adding a meeting in a department or undergoing a structural change to realize a symbolic change. This view is aligned with the findings as, for instance, operational managers find it necessary to add meetings and informal sit-downs during times of change, which is a practice speculated to be performed to guide employees reasoning through participation and learning. This is supported by existing literature as Dumas and Beinecke (2017, p. 869) state that the role of the managers during situations of change is to encourage their employees to participate, innovate, question,

and learn. Several other scholars also address the importance of employees becoming a community of learners by using different instruments to advance excellence and continuously provide support (cf. Adelman & Taylor, 2007; Beech & MacIntosh, 2013; Jabari, 2012). On the other end, Higgs and Roland (2005) highlight the importance of managers using the practice of framing to influence employees regarding the inevitability of a change. Kotter (2011), however, means that it is essential to develop a sense of urgency, guide coalition, have a strategic vision and take the initiative, and that a volunteer army is needed to enlist and motivate employees.

In addition to the organizational structural change within both the whole Armed Forces and the Armed Forces Logistics, the findings show that operational managers that are in a less wanted situation may decide to undergo an internal structural change in their department themselves. An internal structural change of such sort may include the main activities of relocating employees to other sections, restructuring a whole department, and replacing all managers. As formerly conceptualized (see chapter 3.4), the last key-perspective in the literature regarding how a systemic change may be led, include the aspects of altering processes, structures, and symbols in order for a successful systemic change to come about. For instance, Senge (2006) and Adelman and Taylor (2007) argue that the structure of a system drives behavior and that a change of structure must be performed in order for a sustainable change to come about. Similarly, Ha (2014) and Kamara (2019, p. 78) argue that eventual obstacles to a change should be minimized and removed as “renewal also requires the removal of obstacles” (Kamara, 2019, p. 78). Reinholz & Apkarian (2018) also mean that a structural shift requires a symbolic shift for a change that is meaningful to come about. The authors mean that if an initiative of change focuses on beliefs and attitudes, it may be met with resistance as it suggests that there is something wrong with the present manners of working in a department. Thus, a symbolic shift is essential but occurs in a better way as part of another change. (Reinholz & Apkarian, 2018). The findings also show that it may be challenging for some departments to change their, for instance, language, values, myths, and cultural artifacts alongside a systemic change. Thus, some departments may undergo an internal structural change during more significant organizational changes to meet the new prerequisites. This view is supported by Kotter (1995), who argues that eventual interferences coupled with the institution of incentives should be removed as well as that the manager has to minimize obstacles and resistance to change by, for instance, changing the structure and systems that affect the achievement of the vision. In addition, one step in Kotter’s (2011) eight-step process for leading change is to enable action



by removing barriers where eventual interferences coupled with the institution of incentives should be taken away in order for the change process to successfully proceed. Adelman and Taylor (2007, p. 65); however, mean that it is "...rare to find situations where a well-designed systemic change infrastructure is in place. More characteristically, ad hoc mechanisms have been set in motion...".

Three years after and still ongoing the same change, the internal structural change turned out to be a difficult task in one of the departments. From the perspective of systemic change, Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004), Wagener (1993), Reinholz and Apkarian (2018), and Ghavifekr and Hussin, (2011), among others support this view as they argue that a systemic change is complex and dynamic by nature as it is one of the most complex forms of institutional changes since it affects all functions of a whole system. Dumas and Beinecke (2017) also explain change as something complex and uncertain.

A citation revealing a time-consuming but essential task of managers on an operational level: that is the need to change employees' mindset of "it was better before" and to continually strive towards an improved working environment. Similarly, Senge (in Gaffney 1984) argue that a systemic change is a process of to reformulate the minds of the people.

The findings show that some operational leveled employees may not understand that they are working for a public military organization that includes a culture of order and command. The approach of "order and command" is, however, argued to not work during situations of change (see e.g. Bodhanya, 2016; Kahane, 2004). Adelman and Taylor (2007) and Schmidt et al. (2017) mean that the manager must enable their employees to become a community of learners, which, in the case of the Armed Forces, maybe to learn and understand the political process, connected to the 'organization's changes. In addition, there may be a need to reduce the approach of "order and command" during organizational changes as is a delicate situation that, thus, needs to be managed in another manner.

In conclusion, the findings reveal a majority of managers in a more challenging situation. The reasons for this finding may be because individuals tend to focus and fixate on problems rather than the preferred solution. Another reason may be because some employees have worked within the same role for several years, leading to some of them being resistant towards everything in general. The reason employees are resistant towards changes can be speculated to be a result of several different factors. However, one reason may be speculated to be due to some of the recent organizational changes within the Total Defense being without a clear idea

about its future direction, leading to structural inconsistencies and a growing cynicism in the organization (see e.g. Bergström et al., 2014; Reinholz & Apkarian, 2018). The findings show that some employees are non-accepting towards the new organizational rules, which can be because some change processes are perceived as threats as organizations have integrated devices that aim at maintaining stability (see e.g. Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003; Leemans, 1976). The findings also show that managers must have “personal skills” and courage to step up in situations that become unmanageable as negativity may start to impact other employees in an unwanted matter (see e.g. Beech & MacIntosh, 2013). There are several ways to address such an atmosphere, to change the symbols by altering or adding a meeting in a department or to alter both the structure of a whole organization and a department to alter the symbols (see e.g. Reinholz & Apkarian, 2018). The view of changing the structure to alter the symbols aligns with that of Senge (2006), Adelman and Taylor (2007), Reinholz and Apkarian (2018), and Kotter (2011) who mean that action can be enabled by removing barriers. In addition, a systemic change is complex and dynamic where not only structures but also symbols must be changed as it is a necessary mean for the change to successfully proceed (see e.g. Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004; Wagener, 1993; Reinholz & Apkarian, 2018; Ghavifekr & Hussin, 2011). The findings also show that some operational leveled employees may not understand that they are working for a public military organization that includes a culture of order and command, but such an approach is argued to not work during situations of change (see e.g. Bodhanya, 2016; Kahane, 2004). Nevertheless, the literature argues that it is the managers’ task to enable their employees to become a community of learners, which is an argument that is aligned with the findings in this thesis (see e.g. Adelman & Taylor, 2007; Schmidt et al., 2017).

## 6.2 Conclusion

Based on the views presented under perspectives on influencing factors in managing change, one general conclusion that can be taken is that several influencing factors may hinder and enable managers leading a systemic change. This finding may be discussed in *levels of difficulty where the number of management layers and geographical complexity, organizational culture, degree of change and involvement* may be aspects that influence “the success” of an operational leveled manager leading a systemic change. Thus, a conclusion is that the degree of difficulty increases with the number of management layers and that the degree of difficulty is dependent on the type of organizational culture, and degree of change and involvement.

**The number of management layers and geographical complexity** may influence the success of a change process. The findings display that a high number of management levels in the Armed Forces is viewed as a challenge from the perspective of an organizational change. A speculation is, thus, that an increasing organizational hierarchy increases the challenge of communication, as the change communication rationale regarding the change needs to “travel through” more people (see appendix 6 for visualization). Furthermore, it can be speculated that it is essential that the operational management driving the change are strong change advocates. In a large hierarchical organization, however, operational leveled managers are generally not part of the decision-making process and, hence, often receive a change decision at a similar time as all employees. In such cases, operational leveled managers are at a similar place in the change curve as the employees, increasing the difficulty of driving the systemic change in the organization. In addition, a higher geographical complexity within an organization likely increases difficulty. If the whole organization is gathered in one place, communication could be facilitated as well as increase trust and align culture. Another perspective to this conclusion is that the larger the organization, the more difficult it is to involve the organization in the change decision-making process. A lack of involvement is often raised as a common complaint and source of change resistance.

**Type of organizational culture** may influence the success of a change process. It can be speculated that a conservative culture is more difficult to change in comparison to a dynamic or liberal culture. For instance, a traditional organization such as the Armed Forces is likely to be much more conservative and, thus, face a high resistance to change. On the other end, a technology company, rapid and frequent changes are likely often needed to remain competitive in a fast-changing business landscape. In such organizations, resistance to change might be lower. A conclusion is, thus, that the high failure rate in public organizations identified in several studies, in part, could be attributed by a higher degree of conservatism culture. One could also speculate that the lack of profit motive in a defense organization may contribute to a build-up of a more conservative culture concerning change. Additionally, the output and value creation of a public organization may be less objective than that of a private organization. It is likely easier to reach alignment around the need of efficiency measures in a private organization with negative earnings, than in a public organization as “defense capabilities” and “bang for the buck” is more subjective. Lastly, regarding the degree of change and involvement, naturally, large-scale changes are likely more challenging to implement than smaller scale changes as it includes more features and influences a larger area of an organization, and, thus, more people.

**Identifying change agents and supporters early on in the process and acknowledging individuality.** Based on the views presented under perspectives in managing a systemic change, one general conclusion that can be made is that the management of a systemic change on an operational level includes several approaches, which is mainly dependent on the attitude of the employees. That is if the employees are supportive or resistant in general and towards the ongoing changes. This finding can be discussed in aspects of change agents and change resisters, and individuality, where a scale regarding resistance to change, could be used to assess a specific individual's likelihood to be resistant towards change. Based on the findings, a conclusion is that the attitude of the people influences the way a manager leads a change, thus, approaching and identifying change agents (supporters) and change resisters and acknowledging individuality early on in the process, is of the essence during times of change.

**Having enough time and resources.** Having enough time and resources is of vital importance during organizational changes since it is something that enables managers to work with change issues successfully. Based on the findings, a common "issue" amongst the operational leveled managers seems to be a lack of time and resources to work with tasks connected to the change successfully. The reason for the former is that tasks are developed and sent to the operational leveled managers ad-hoc and not worked through enough on all line-levels as well as that everyday tasks are still ongoing in the same pace. A lack of enough time or resources to work with change issues is something that influences several aspects that is important to focus on during organizational changes. Such aspects may include the amount of communication between one another and participation in the change process, which, in turn, may influence the amount of understanding of the process and its underlying meaning, the employees feeling of being loyal to both one another and the employer, as well as type of attitude towards the ongoing changes. From this perspective, a conclusion is that the amount of time and resources provided to all line-levels to work with the change, influence the way an operational leveled manager manages a change, such as amount of communication and participation, aspects that influence the employees amount of understanding and type of attitude towards the ongoing changes and loyalty towards both one another and the employer.

**There is no "one size fits all" approach to managing change.** There seems to be more literature that include change and management in connection to employees resistant towards change, which may be due to the fact there are less "issues" with employees that are supportive towards organizational changes, leading to a lack of both interest and necessity to study the phenomenon from that perspective among both scholars and practitioners. In the case of this

thesis, the findings also display a majority of managers with employees resistant to change. Leading a systemic change where the personnel is excited and positively receiving a change may be something that can be performed seamlessly where following, for instance, Kotter's (1996) eight-step process can be performed without encountering any significant problems since the personnel is overall receptive towards future changes. It is, however, argued that the sequences and steps of actions for leading change suggested by scholars are both abstract and hard to employ in practice. The former may be relatable to scenarios where employees are resistant towards systemic changes as such attitude seem to need to be attended to differently depending on both situation and individual (see e.g. By, 2005). Similarly, Reinholz & Apkarian (2018), Dandeker and Gow (1999), and Adelman and Taylor (2007) argue that there is no one size fits all approach to managing change as all organizations have a unique community and own, structure, culture, history, and needs. In addition, all changes are different, organizations are complex phenomenon's on their own, and the context of a change initiative plays a vital role during times of change as it influences how a manager may lead a change (see e.g. Bodhanya, 2016; Leemans, 1976; Burnes, 2009; Coram & Burnes, 2001; Van der Voet, 2016). A systemic change is argued to be complicated and dynamic by nature as it is one of the most complex forms of institutional changes since it intends to influence a whole structure or character of a government (see e.g. Wagener, 1993; Ghavifekr & Hussin, 2011). A premise that can be drawn from these notions is that there is no single and only way of leading a systemic change in the context of a public organization since several factors have to be taken into consideration during an organizational change. Thus, the argument that the field of management and change include several theories and approaches that is contradictory towards one another where correct recommendations have been primarily misinterpreted, misrepresented, and misunderstood, may be argued to be misleading. Therefore, a conclusion is that there is no one single way to lead a change due to several influencing factors that all play a vital role in how a change can and may be managed within an organization (see, e.g., Burnes et al., 2018; Burn and Cooke, 2012).

### **6.3 Suggestions for future research and limitations**

Due to resource limitations of this study, several interesting aspects and perspectives have been excluded during the research process. Further research could include the perspective of employee or employee and manager, to approach the phenomenon from the perspective of resource dependency theory, place more emphasis on aspects of organizational culture or change agents versus change resistance, or military culture versus civilian culture in the context

of managing a systemic change, on an operational level, in the context of a public organization. A final suggestion for further research is to use another research strategy as it may result in another finding on the phenomenon of managing a systemic change, on an operational level, in the context of a public organization.

One limitation of this thesis can be found in the interview process. Even though the semi-structured theme interviews permitted the interviewees to, hopefully, uninhibitedly describe their perspective on the matter, the limited number of the interviewees (3) restricts an eventual generalization on the empirical findings in this thesis. Thus, interviewing a more significant number of managers on an operational level in the Armed Forces is suggested for further research.

A second limitation can be identified in the type of people interviewed. The interviewees had worked for the organization for an extended period, more than 20 years each. The outcome may, thus, have been different if there would have been people that had worked in the case organization for a shorter period as they may have contributed to a new way of thinking. Therefore, interviewing operational-leveled managers that have worked for less than 20 years or including both "groups" in the case organization is suggested for further research.

A third limitation can also be identified in my background to the case organization. I have been employed at the case organization from May 2015 to February 2019 as well as both have worked with the 3.NSU organizational reform and the interviewees, which is something that has been taken into account during the writing of this thesis. Therefore, one limitation in this study is that I may not have seen the big picture as the ontological position influences me. This is, however, something I encountered during the writing of this thesis as well as discussed in chapter 4.4 as I, for instance, initially started this process with the idea that I would study the organizational reform that the organization was undergoing in 2018, which was not the case. Nonetheless, there is still a possibility that I might have missed some ideas due to both my work experience in the case organization and relationships with the informants.

The fourth limitation can be found in my translation of the interviews before the analysis process as it is argued that a "...translation is also an interpretive act, meaning may get lost in the translation process" (van Nes et al., 2010, 313). Therefore, this might have contributed to eventual shortcomings in the data analysis process.

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# **APPENDICES**

## **Appendix 1. Semi structured theme interviews questions (general list)**

### **INTRODUCTION**

- Debriefing this thesis phenomenon under study, managing change on an operational level in the context of a public organization, and using the Armed Forces as a case for studying that particular topic. Followed by a short description of the thesis research strategy, grounded theorizing, highlighting that I wanted to get an understanding of the interviewees' perspectives on the matter.
- Asking for consent to record the interview on my phone and computer.
- Highlighting confidentiality and the interviewees' anonymity in the study.
- Thanking the interviewee for taking the time to participate in the study.

### **PERSONAL INFORMATION (IF OKAY)**

- Gender, age, education, how long and which positions they have worked within in the Armed Forces.
- Their experience/background in the Armed Forces.

### **THEMES**

#### **Organization**

- How would you describe the Armed Forces for someone that has never worked in the organization before?
- In general, how would you describe your tasks as a manager?
- In general, how would you describe a regular week of yours?

#### **Change (reorganizations, structural changes, reforms, systemic changes)**

- How would you describe the currently on-going change?
- How would you describe the outcome of the Armed Forces former organizational changes and reforms?
  - o What has been good and less good and why?
  - o What did you learn from that organizational reform?
- How do you see the differences between the current reorganization/changes and the former reorganizations/changes?
- How do you experience the currently on-going re-organization/changes?

- What do you think about the leadership/management and implementation of the current re-organization/change and *name of product*?
- What do you think affects (positively and negatively) the implementation of an organizational reform?
- How is the communication between the Service Center managers and managers at other levels?

### **Leading a change on an operational level**

- How do you see your role in the current re-organization/change?
  - o In what way have you been involved?
  - o How has it been going?
- What is your opinion in how a manager/leader should lead such a change on an operational level?
- What is your experience in working with change in general in the organization?
- How do you understand (define) organizational change or change?
- How do you view your responsibility during the ongoing changes?
- What types of tools and education have you been given to be able to lead and implement change at this level?
- What has been the most difficult case concerning organizational change, and change that you have faced? What kinds of issues arose?
- Do you think that managers and employees, or different levels (top, middle, low) view change differently or apply it differently, and if so, how?
- What do you think are the barriers and facilitators in working with change among managers in your position? How do you address these barriers? What do you do and/or what would you like to be able to do?
- What do you think makes working with change issues work well or not work well?
- What kinds of conflicts within change issues, if any, have you faced at your department? What do you think are the reasons to why these occur?

### **CONCLUDING**

- (Reconfirming practicalities if necessary)
- Do you have any other thoughts about these issues? (eventual clarification if something was unclear for them or me)
- (Thanking the interviewee for taking the time to participate in the study)

**ADDITIONAL FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS ASKED, AS APPROPRIATE, WITH EACH PARTICIPANT, SUCH AS:**

- Can you elaborate what you mean by that?
- How?
- How do you mean...?
- Why?
- Can you give some examples on that?
- What exactly do you mean when you say...?
- What is your opinion of that?
- Is there anything else in that...?
- How/what was that like?
- How did you respond then?
- What did you think then?

**Appendix 2.** Initial data analysis. Constantly reoccurring concepts (patterns) identified during the initial data analysis of the interviews.

Initial core concepts	
Bureaucracy	Hierarchy
Geographically spread, large, and old organization	Decision paths long
Several layers of management	Internal structural change ( <i>relocating employees, restructuring the whole department, replacing managers, changing the language</i> )
Cultural change ( <i>organizational change, reorganization, huge change or difference, structural change, internal structural change</i> )	Constant organizational changes ( <i>reorganization, dismantle, internal structural change, refine</i> )
Structural inconsistencies	Learning
Governed by elected representatives (top-down decision making)	Participation ( <i>involvement</i> )
Communication ( <i>information</i> ),	Speculation
Time and resources	(Type of) attitude
Uncertainty ( <i>unclear, I do not know, maybe, I believe, I have no idea</i> ),)	Informal and formal meetings

Legacy (history)	(Feeling of) togetherness ( <i>team, teambuilding, belonging, together, group, everyone</i> )
Holistic view	Discussing
Listening	Guiding
Understanding	Military culture (order and command, subordination)
Calming down	Follow-up (feedback)
People (individual)	Long-term task

**Appendix 3.** Initial and focused analysis. Detailed coding table developed during the initial and focused coding phases.

Focused category	Initial core concept	Example from the interview	Core concept stemmed words
Type of change	Culture change	<p>“...it is an astronomical culture change”. (Interviewee oug)</p> <p>“...it is strange that there has been so little information during such a big reorganization”. (Interviewee phw)</p> <p>“...what has happened here is really big in comparison to the reorganization. This section became a new section 160101, which started when I came. That is the biggest change as well as that we have become a war unit, that they are going to be participating in the trainings and go on education, personal skills training, that they are going to start wearing weapons and participate on trainings. SAP (PRIO) and that we became this section and that we now are undergoing the security clearance. And the changed rules for doing workouts. Those are the big ones”. (Interviewee oug)</p>	Organizational change, reorganization, dismantle, huge change/difference, structural change, culture change, refine, refined, systemic change
Institutional dynamics (history, context, and environment)	Bureaucracy, hierarchy, long decision paths and layers of management	<p>“The decisions paths are long, it is a lot of bureaucracy, hierarchy, ...”. (Interviewee oug)</p> <p>“...it also has to go through many departments. For instance, I’ll call my closest manager and that manager calls someone in turn, and so on... And then, the actual issue has been forgotten when it finally has reached the right person”. (Interviewee phw)</p>	Bureaucracy, hierarchy <i>Outcome: long decision paths and layers of management</i>
	Governed by elected representatives	“It is because we are governed by our elected representatives that...”. (Interviewee pwz)	Top-down decision making, governed, elected representatives

Large, old, and geographically spread organization	<p>“...He has not understood how big the organization really is here...”. (Interviewee phw)</p> <p>”...we are in all the <i>bigger</i> cities around the country”. (Interviewee pwz)</p>	
Military culture (order, command, and subordination)	<p>“To sit calmly in the boat until the decision is made. Then I’ll have a new map, a new position, and then we’ll go with that. And, if I have any opinions about it, before the decision is made, then I’ll have opinions about it and then I’ll be quiet. If the decision is made, then it’s made. I cannot change that”. (Interviewee pwz)</p>	Military culture, order, command, subordinate, subordination
Constant organizational changes	<p>“...it is an astronomical culture change”. (Interviewee oug)</p> <p>“We have been shut down several times during the <i>name</i>-time where we were supposed to clean out our lockers, but we stayed and that has happened many times, we have been refined several times...”. (Interviewee phw)</p>	Organizational change, reorganization, dismantle, huge change/difference, structural change, culture change, refine, refined
Time and Resources	<p>”...my resources do not cover all of those tasks”. (Interviewee pwz)</p> <p>“They [the personnel] do not see me some days as I am sitting here with RALS, annual reports, are doing an inventory of secondary occupations, and are trying to understand all of the orders that we have and how we are going to do that and... then the time is eaten”. (Interviewee oug)</p>	
Structural inconsistencies	<p>“...I have, however, been very clear about the fact that the supporting section of the organization must grow if the organization grows. We cannot be <i>number</i> people if there is 300 military people, as we are taking care of everything with only <i>number</i> people. ...Actually, I have even been talking with the supreme commander about this when he was here to hold a speech. I have also talked with the manager of <i>organization</i> now when we are going to be part of their organization. It is my impression that the supreme commander is wondering if we really will be able to manage everything on <i>number</i> people. He has not understood how big the organization really is here”. (Interviewee phw)</p> <p>...” I am still the one that is ultimately responsible for that person since s/he is not the one who has hired that person, it’s me. Or, not me even, it is the unit manager, which I also think can be a little askew sometimes”. (Interviewee pwz)</p>	Askew, weird



		<p>“...but it should be prepared by upper management and delivered to the Service Centers. That is also one thing that can be weird...” (Interviewee pwz)</p> <p>“They (the personnel) just do not understand, he does not understand that it is against the rules...” (Interviewee oug)</p> <p>“We are doing things prior to the reorganization, an inventory. No, nothing. We have neither gotten feedback on the risk analysis that we sent, how they have managed that one. How did the risk analysis look like for our Service Centre? How did it look like for the whole unit? We would have wanted feedback on that. We were actually discussing that recently, what did they do with the risk analysis? We did put in time and effort to do it”. (Interviewee oug)</p> <p>“They [the personnel] do not see me some days as I am sitting here with RALS, annual reports, are doing an inventory of secondary occupations, and are trying to understand all of the orders that we have and how we are going to do that and...”. (Interviewee oug)</p>	
	Understand		Understand, understood
Communication, participation, and resources	Uncertainty about the process, the outcome, and the aim of the change	<p>“I have no idea. So, as you can see. I do not know that much about these things. We have not been able to get any answers in that question. Everyone we ask knows nothing. They say that it will be solved somehow...” (Interviewee phw)</p> <p>“I think that we are going to communicate with <i>name of organization</i>. But we should be provided information about these things soon. I hope”. (Interviewee phw)</p>	I have no idea, maybe, I believe, I do not know, I think
	Speculation	<p>“The question is what they actually talked about...” (Interviewee pwz)</p> <p>“...questions regarding who we will turn to and such, those things are a little unclear, but I usually say that it will be okay further ahead, even though we do not know anything about today”. (Interviewee phw)</p>	
	Communication and information	<p>“There hasn’t been any [communication]”. (Interviewee oug)</p> <p>“...it is strange that there has been so little information during such a big reorganization”. (Interviewee phw)</p>	Communication, communicate, information, inform
	Participation	<p>“...there has never been any discussion about me participating in those [<i>planning the organizational change on a unit level</i>] meetings. Everything is discussed in those meetings, and it concerns me and the other managers on the Service Centers as well. But</p>	Participate, participation, involved, involvement

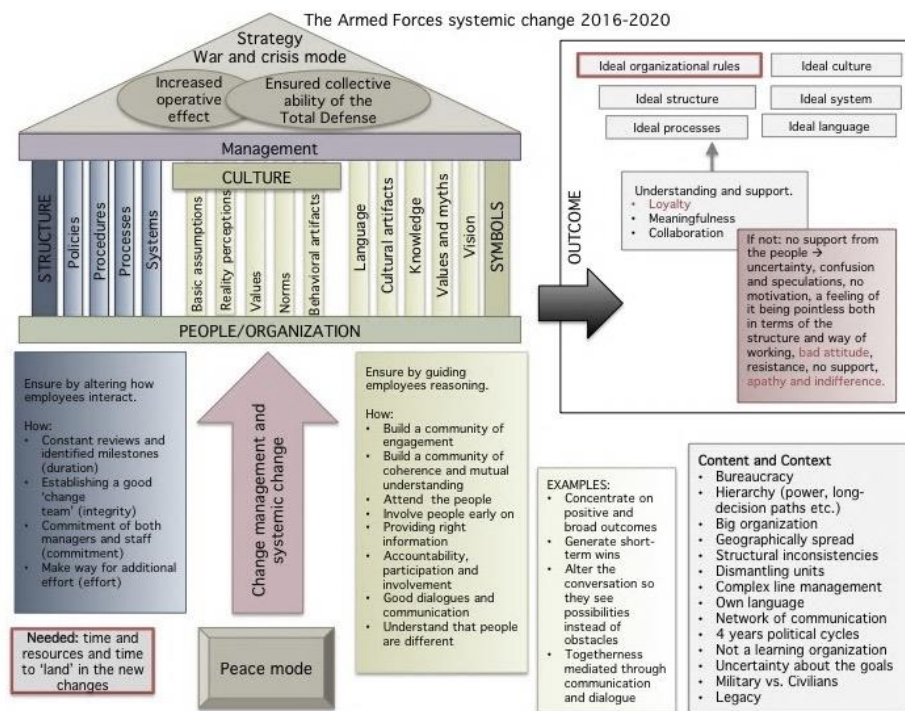
		in those meetings, it has been decided that we are not participating, because then the people in the management department believes that they are useless, which is not the case". (Interviewee pwz)	
	Holistic view	"This is one thing that I have been working with <i>a lot</i> . The holistic view". (Interviewee oug)	The big picture, the bigger picture
	Togetherness	"It is another kind of team also... or another group". (Interviewee oug)	Team, teambuilding, together, group, everyone, belong, belonging
	Time and Resources	"...my resources do not cover all of those tasks". (Interviewee pwz) "They [the personnel] do not see me some days as I am sitting here with RALS, annual reports, are doing an inventory of secondary occupations, and are trying to understand all of the orders that we have and how we are going to do that and...". (Interviewee oug)	
Constantly striving to improve and enhance the teams atmosphere	People	"What kind of people is it, how big is it, what does it mean for the individual... That is what you should be looking at. What does it mean for the individual, this change? Something that on a management level perceived as nothing can be a huge thing for someone else". (Interviewee oug)	Individual, people
	Togetherness	"It is another kind of team also... or another group". (Interviewee oug)	Team, teambuilding, together, group, everyone, belong
	Listen	"It is about listening, "what do you want me to do". It does not have to be such a big thing, "but a small thing when I think about it". (Interviewee oug)	Listen, listening, hear
	Discussing	"...I have even been talking with the supreme commander about..." (Interviewee phw)	Discussing, discuss, conversing, talking, speaking
	Guiding	"It is about listening, "what do you want me to do". It does not have to be such a big thing, "but a small thing when I think about it". (Interviewee oug)	
	Calm down	"...it is about calming down the personnel and saying..." (Interviewee phw)	Calm down, calming down
Focusing on the emotions of those	Attitude	"...there has been a lot of "I will not wear a uniform; I am not employed for that". Meanwhile, the other Service Centers, they might also have had that attitude but still	

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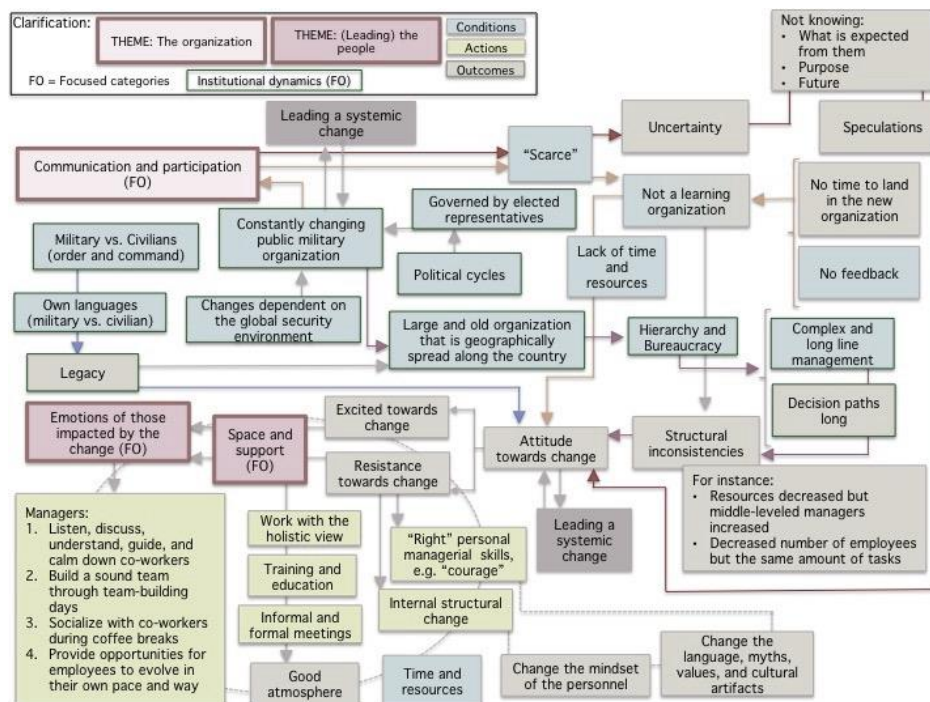
	been thinking “this is going to be fun”. In here, you dwell instead...” (Interviewee pwz)	
	” We have ‘the legacy’ here...” (Interviewee oug)	
Legacy	“...dwell about what has been. History is important, but sometimes you just have to look forward and make good of the things that is”. (Interviewee pwz)	History, dwell, verbal fighting
(informal and formal) meetings	“We have section meetings every Friday where we talk about the reorganization”. (Interviewee oug)	
Holistic view	“This is one thing that I have been working with <i>a lot</i> . The holistic view”. (Interviewee oug)	
	” We have ‘the legacy’ here...” (Interviewee oug)	
Legacy	“...dwell about what has been. History is important, but sometimes you just have to look forward and make good of the things that is”. (Interviewee pwz)	History, dwell, verbal fighting
Internal structural change	“So, all of the managers are replaced in one year. And that is a strategy. A lot of people have though that it is stupid to change all of the managers and have wondered what we are thinking with. But that is the thinking. A loyal manager that sees things with new eyes and 80 percent of what we are working with, we are looking at orders that are from December 2015. Technical warehouse manager, for instance, that is supposed to be identified and up-and-running. We would not have <i>number</i> critical deliveries if we would have been up-and-running. It would’ve been taken care of in another way. So, all of the managers have been replaced during the course of one year”. (Interviewee oug)	Relocating employees to other sections, restructuring the whole department, and replacing all managers, changing language
Attitude	“...there has been a lot of “I will not wear a uniform; I am not employed for that”. Meanwhile, the other Service Centers, they might also have had that attitude but still been thinking “this is going to be fun”. In here, you dwell instead...” (Interviewee pwz)	

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**Appendix 4.** Example of a memo including the categories and concepts found in the data, literature and conceptual framework and how they relate to another, which was developed during the writing of this thesis.



**Appendix 5.** Schematic picture of the initial identifications of the relationships between the emerged categories and concepts during the data analysis



**Appendix 6.** Vizualizing management layers and geographical complexity.  
Management layers and geographical complexity.

